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CHINA DAILY

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Beijing and Moscow hail solid relations

FM's trip to Russia leads to fresh plans for high-level exchanges, more cooperation

By ZHANG YUNBI
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The fresh consensus and policy manifestations made by China and Russia during Foreign Minister Wang Yi's latest visit to Moscow serve as a convincing reminder of the bilateral ties' resilience as well as the two nations' capability to advance their shared policy agenda in an undisturbed and productive way, observers said.

During his official visit from Monday to Wednesday, Wang met in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Highlights of the meetings include fresh plans for high-level exchanges later this year, joint celebrations to mark the 80th anniversary of victory in World War II and pragmatic cooperation.

As this year also marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War, Putin told Wang that he looks forward to the Chinese side attending commemorative events in Russia, and Russia is making all-out preparations for the events.

Moscow is ready to take this as an opportunity to bring the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination "to a new level" and the two sides should "keep sending powerful signals to the world on strengthen-

ing strategic coordination", the Russian leader said.

For his part, Wang said "the advancement of China-Russia ties will not halt but lead to broader horizons", the friendship between the two countries has a long-term perspective and their cooperation "allows no disturbance from outside".

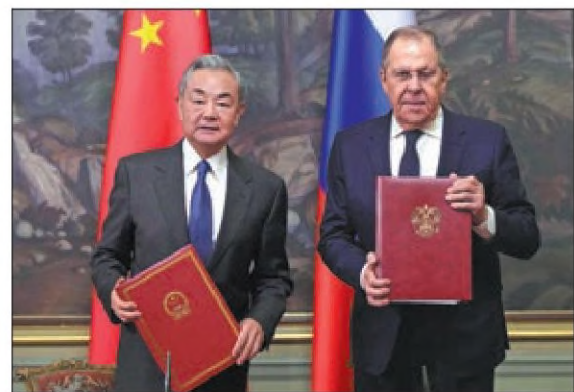
Since Beijing and Moscow have aligned their plans to support each other's 80th anniversary commemorative events, the engagements between the heads of state of the two countries this year "will again write new chapters" for bilateral ties, he added.

In Moscow, Wang and Lavrov talked about the Ukraine crisis, and the two sides coordinated their positions on the current international situation, particularly developments in the Asia-Pacific region.

Wang expressed China's support for all peacemaking efforts, noting that China is willing to build more consensus through the Group of Friends for Peace and play a constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Lavrov said that Russia fully supports China's position on the Taiwan question, it is ready to work together to safeguard and defend a just and rational international order, and it will never allow the resurgence of Nazism, fascism and militarism.

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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov pose for a photo on Tuesday during a signing ceremony following their talks in Moscow, Russia.
PAVEL BEDNYAKOV / REUTERS

CHINA'S SHIPBUILDERS RIDE CREST OF GLOBAL SUCCESS

Washington's efforts to bolster capacity unlikely to faze nation's booming industry

By YU YILEI and WANG YING in Shanghai



The United States' plan to boost its shipbuilding capacity and impose fees on Chinese vessels is unlikely to have a major impact on the booming industry in China, experts and analysts said.

In his national address last month, US President Donald Trump vowed to set up a new office of shipbuilding in the White House to "resurrect the American shipbuilding industry, including commercial shipbuilding and military shipbuilding".

Trump said the US is going to make ships "very fast, very soon", which will have "a huge impact" to further enhance national security.

In a separate move, the US Trade Representative on Feb 21 pro-

posed charging substantial fees on Chinese-built vessels entering US ports under a union-supported plan to spur US shipbuilding.

Under the proposal, vessels owned by Chinese maritime transport operators would pay a port entrance fee of up to \$1 million each time, and other operators using Chinese-built ships could be charged as much as \$1.5 million.

However, industry experts and insiders said the US government's latest attempts to restore its shipbuilding prowess are unlikely to shake China's current position as the world's largest commercial shipbuilder.

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Military exercises around the island of Taiwan continue for the second day on Wednesday. The "Strait Thunder-2025A" exercise was carried out in the middle and southern parts of the Taiwan Strait. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

PLA drills around Taiwan achieve desired results

By JIANG CHENGLONG and ZHAO LEI

The two-day joint exercises launched by the People's Liberation Army around the island of Taiwan, involving an aircraft carrier group, concluded on Wednesday evening, and experts said the exercises aimed to cut off resource import lines, escape routes and external support lines of "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

The PLA conducted joint drills and training in waters to the north, south and east of Taiwan Island on Tuesday, involving ground, air, naval and missile forces, and carried out the "Strait Thunder-2025A" exercise on Wednesday, according to Senior Colonel Shi Yi, spokesman for the PLA's Eastern Theater Command.

The command successfully completed all tasks of the joint training, thoroughly testing the integrated joint combat capabilities of the troops, he said.

The command forces remain on high alert, continuously strengthening training and preparedness, and resolutely thwarting all "Taiwan independence" separatist activities, Shi said.

The "Strait Thunder-2025A" exercise was conducted in the middle and southern areas of the Taiwan Strait, focusing on tactics and maneuvers for identifying suspicious objects, warning and expulsion, as well as interception and seizure, Shi said in a statement on Wednesday morning.

He said the operation was intended to test the troops' capabilities in regional monitoring and control, joint blockade and precision strikes on key targets.

In addition, a carrier strike group led by the aircraft carrier CNS Shandong conducted assault drills in waters to the east of Taiwan Island.

Shi said the CNS Shandong strike group cooperated with other naval and air units to carry out exercises of vessel-aircraft coordination, regional airspace dominance, and strikes against land and sea targets.

The Ground Force of the PLA's Eastern Theater Command conducted long-range live-fire drills in waters of the East China Sea on Wednesday morning, with mock targets including major ports and energy infrastructure, and with the precision artillery strike achieving the desired results.

Wang Wenjuan, a researcher at the PLA Academy of Military Science, said that the drills on Tuesday were focused on force deployment, while Wednesday's exercise emphasized deterrence, blockade and isolation.

The operational routes indicated that the CNS Shandong aircraft carrier group quickly maneuvered to the east of Taiwan Island, coordinating with forces approaching the island from both inner and outer lines, fully demonstrating the hardcore strength to deter "independence" separatist forces and promote reunification, she said.

Zhang Chi, a professor at PLA

National Defense University, said that in recent years, the PLA's aircraft carrier groups have carried out multiple exercises to the east of Taiwan Island.

Taiwan authorities have long viewed the eastern part of the island as a so-called base for preserving military strength and a comfort zone, he said, pointing out that for a long time, "Taiwan independence" separatist forces have fantasized that the Chinese mainland would not actually take military action and that external forces would assist them.

However, Zhang stressed that the presence of the PLA's aircraft carrier groups to the east of the island aimed to help block "three lines" militarily.

"The first line is cutting off the lifeline of energy and resource imports for 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces. The second line is blocking the support line of external assistance to these forces," Zhang said. "The third line is preventing the escape line for separatists attempting to evade sanctions and flee."

This demonstrates that the path of "Taiwan independence" separatist forces leads only to a dead end, and that China's reunification is both inevitable and eventual, the professor said.

Song Tao, head of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said during a meeting on Wednesday with Hsia Li-yan, vice-chairman of Taiwan's opposition Chinese Kuomintang party, that compatriots on

both sides of the Taiwan Strait are family, not enemies. He also stressed that any provocations for "independence" are destined to fail.

Defense Ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang said in a statement on Wednesday that "Taiwan independence" and peace in the Taiwan Strait are irreconcilable.

In his remarks, Zhang condemned the Taiwan authorities led by Lai Ching-te for recklessly carrying out provocative actions to seek "Taiwan independence" and for escalating tensions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The PLA's joint combat exercises demonstrated its strong capability to strike against "Taiwan independence" provocations, he said.

In response to other countries' comments regarding the PLA's drills around the island, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a regular news conference on Wednesday that the Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair and brooks no external interference.

As long as provocations of "Taiwan independence" continue, countermeasures and punishments will not cease, the spokesman warned. "We will not allow anyone, any force, to separate Taiwan from China in any way, and will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Inside

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AI reshapes race for digital sovereignty

Artificial intelligence is at the core of digital transformation and is set to drive the next phase of productivity growth. However, AI has been politicized ever since the administration of former US president Joe Biden introduced the first export controls on United States-designed semiconductors in 2022.

Restrictions on Chinese 5G network equipment were imposed under the first Donald Trump administration in the name of protecting national security. This stance has since been codified into guidelines and laws of the European Union. The US export controls on AI technology are primarily driven by a raw attempt to contain China.

Now, the dominant focus on semiconductors and scaling compute as the primary path to better models and higher intelligence, which makes US hyperscalers pay around \$200 billion each year, has been disrupted by China's AI start-



up DeepSeek, which, like its Chinese peers, only has limited access to advanced Nvidia chips for model training and inference.

DeepSeek was able to optimize compute efficiency across what Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of US semiconductor company Nvidia, defines as the three scaling laws — pre-training scaling, post-training scaling and test-time scaling — without relying solely on sheer computing power for each of them.

Even Europe's tech community, paralyzed by the increasing gap with the US' AI industry, has been inspired by DeepSeek's compute efficiency-driven approach.

The idea has been reinforced that catching up is still possible by focusing on software engineering

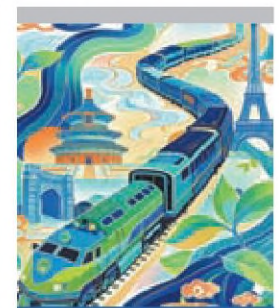
rather than pouring billions into compute infrastructure.

Yet, Europe's awakening is driven not just by DeepSeek, but primarily by the current US administration turning its back on Europe and former prime minister of Italy Mario Draghi's devastating assessment of the EU's decreasing competitiveness.

The success of DeepSeek also challenges the assumption that strict regulations hinder breakthrough innovation. China enforces stringent regulations to ensure AI safety and security. Yet, its AI ecosystem continues to flourish.

Immediately after his inauguration, Trump revoked his predecessor's executive order on AI as a means of rejecting "overregulation", ensuring the US "develop AI systems that are free from ideological bias" and sustaining US AI leadership for the benefit of US workers.

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INSIDE
Toward a new era in East-West connectivity
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PAGE TWO



Left: China's first LNG carrier, *Dapeng Sun*, was delivered by Hudong-Zhonghua in 2008.

Right: World's first B-tank very large ethane carrier — *Pacific Ineos Belstaff* — was delivered by Jiangnan Shipyard in 2021.

Below: *Adora Magic City*, China's first domestically built cruise ship undocks in Shanghai in June 2023.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Shipbuilding: Cruising to ongoing success



From page 1

"The trend of China's shipbuilding industry holding the title as the world's largest shipbuilder is irreversible, and I see little challenge to China retaining the position," said Hu Keyi, chief of corporate technology with Jiangnan Shipyard, a unit of China State Shipbuilding Corp, the world's largest shipbuilder.

Yi Guowei, deputy manager of large cruise ship project of CSSC's Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co, said, "the US used to be the world's greatest shipbuilding power, but the shipbuilding industry requires a complete industrial chain, which took China decades to develop to reach its current scale."

In a March 23 Washington Post report, maritime experts were quoted as saying it is unrealistic to expect the US shipbuilding industry to revive overnight, and it will require decades of ongoing support from the US government. There are currently not enough US-made ships to replace China-built ones in the market, so to impose hefty port entrance fees on Chinese ships will only increase freight costs and disrupt global supply chains, the report added.

Numbers say it all

China last year led the world in contracting, order book and delivery of vessels, three major indicators in global shipbuilding, according to data published by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Chinese shipbuilders completed construction of 55.7 percent of global orders in 2024, received 74.1 percent of the new orders, and accounted for 63.1 percent of the world's hand-held vessel orders, representing year-on-year growth of 13.8 percent, 58.8 percent and 49.7 percent respectively.

China now produces more than half of the world's cargo ships by tonnage, up from just 5 percent in 1999, followed by Japan and South Korea, USTR figures showed. Last year, US shipyards built just 0.01 percent of the total.

In 2023, China for the first time accounted for half of the world's total shipbuilding production by delivering 17.4 million compensated gross tonnage, and significantly consolidating its importance to the global shipbuilding industry, said Stephen Gordon, managing director of Clark-

sons Research. Despite major disruptions in recent years, shipping remains vital to the global economy by moving 85 percent of all trade globally, Gordon said.

"The outstanding achievements in capturing new orders and expanding production have indicated the strong foundation of the Chinese shipbuilding industry, and they are the results of collaboration with global prime suppliers," Li Yanqing, secretary-general of the Beijing-based China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry told China Central Television.

The orders Chinese shipbuilders hold in hand are equivalent to the combined workload of four years, laying a solid foundation for the sector to achieve stable development, Li said.

Starting from scratch

Although the Chinese shipbuilding industry tops the number of new orders received across 14 vessel categories, it was not until the late 1970s when local shipbuilders began pursuing international orders.

When China began opening-up, its undeveloped shipbuilding sector was striving to complete for orders in the highly-competitive global market then dominated by the European Union, US, Japan, and South Korea.

The successful delivery of the 27,000-ton bulk carrier *Regent Tampopo* in January 1982 to Hong Kong entrepreneur Chi-Li Pao was widely regarded as a breakthrough. Constructed by CSSC's Dalian Shipbuilding Industry Co in 18 months, it was the first large-scale ship built by China and exported in accordance with international standards, according to the Marine Design & Research Institute of China.

The domestic shipbuilding industry entered a new era in the early 80s, and China received 77 vessel orders from international customers, according to MARIC.

"The high quality and large quantity of Chinese talent made the Chinese shipbuilding industry's transformation possible," said Zhang Fumin, a MARIC researcher.

"In the past few decades, several aspects have contributed to the rise of the nation's shipbuilding industry. The continuous industrial development has offered the foundation; the stable domestic economic growth

provides an ideal environment; and the central government's consistent support for technologies create the ground for industries including shipbuilding to grow and vigorously development," Zhang explained.

In 1995, China surpassed Germany to become the world's third-largest shipbuilder.

Upgrade transition

Since then, China's shipbuilding industry has been on a fast track. New orders received grew from 6.56 million tons in 2002 to surpass 50 million tons in 2006, and doubled to 107.52 million tons in 2007.

The number of active shipbuilders in China also quickly increased from 79 in 2000 to 414 in 2008, according to a report by China Ship News.

Many of the industry's pioneers later started building high-end vessels that require greater technical skills, but also offer more added value.

Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding (Group) Co, a Shanghai-based subsidiary of CSSC, started looking at constructing LNG carriers in the late 1990s, when the market was dominated by Japan, and later South Korea.

LNG carriers are recognized as one of the greatest maritime construction challenges, along with aircraft carriers and large-scale cruiseliners.

The building of these carriers had shifted from Europe to Asia back then, but Asian shipyards were unwilling to cooperate with Chinese counterparts for fear of losing their dominance, said Chen Jun, general manager of Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding.

However, almost 10 years later in April 2008, Hudong-Zhonghua deliv-

ered China's first LNG carrier, *Dapeng Sun*, and broke the market dominance.

Hudong-Zhonghua has now delivered more than 40 LNG carriers of various types, and is on track to build the world's largest such carrier with a maximum carrying capacity of 271,000 cubic meters of liquefied natural gas.

To date, Hudong-Zhonghua has developed five generations of LNG carriers and become a global leader in LNG carrier building.

The company's shipyard is aiming to create a new record this year by having as many as 19 LNG carriers under construction at the same time. The shipbuilder is also planning to set a new record by delivering 13 LNG carriers in 2025.

Opportunity knocks

The number of active shipyards around the world shrunk from 1,031 in 2008 to 371 in 2023. Chinese shipbuilders took advantage of the trend to restructure and reshuffle, and increase their global market share.

"While conventional shipbuilding countries including South Korea and Japan were confronted with tremendous challenges amid the global downturn, Chinese shipbuilders rapidly adapted to the new situation based on their strong risk control capability — as well as strengths in production ability — and expanded their global market share," said Wang Zhanjian, director of the Design and Research Institute with CSSC's Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co.

In 2010, China's shipbuilding industry accounted for 41.9 percent of deliveries, 48.5 percent of con-

tracts and 40.8 percent of the global order book. Since then, China has strengthened its domination of the global market.

In the meantime, more and more Chinese shipbuilders have made breakthroughs in building large-scale and high-end vessels.

One of its most notable achievements is the independently developed, designed, and constructed very large ethane carrier. According to Hu from Jiangnan Shipyard, the vessel was independently developed by his shipyard, with all the core systems having independent intellectual property rights.

"Its complexity is not inferior to that of building LNG carriers," said Hu.

Starting research and development in 2016, Jiangnan Shipyard received its first VLEC order at the end of 2018, and delivered its inaugural vessel in late 2020. To date, the Shanghai-based shipyard has delivered nine VLECs, with another 40 more ships in hand, accounting more than 70 percent of all hand-held VLEC orders worldwide.

"Such unparalleled dominance in the global VLEC market is attributed to the more than two decades of gas carrier research, development, and construction," said Hu.

Jewel in the crown

Delivered on Nov 4, 2023, *Adora Magic City*, the nation's first domestically built cruise ship, completed its 100th commercial voyage on March 10, marking a new milestone in China's cruise ship development.

The giant liner made its maiden commercial voyage on Jan 1, 2024.

The successful delivery and operation of the vessel meant China joined Italy, France, Germany and Finland as one of only five nations to design and build a cruise ship.

"Building *Adora Magic City* is a solid step in China's transition from the world's largest shipbuilder into a maritime power," said Wang, director of the design and research institute.

Building a cruise ship is the jewel in the crown of the shipbuilding industry, as the gigantic engineering project directly reflects a nation's scientific and technological level, and manufacturing strengths, Wang said.

A modern "city on the sea", *Adora Magic City* is a 323.6-meter-long and 37.2-meter-wide cruise ship that contains 107 systems, 55,000 sets of

equipment, 25 million components and parts, 4,750 kilometers of cables, 365 km of pipelines and 120 km of air pipes.

"China's leapfrog from a follower to a global leader in just over four decades resulted from a number of factors including the guidance of national strategies, continuous breakthroughs in technological innovation, and in-depth integration with the global market," said Wang.

"Cruise market opportunities, along with green transformation and accelerated digital and intelligent transformation will bring unprecedented development opportunities to China's shipbuilding industry," Wang said.

Staying on top

China's shipbuilding industry has reached a critical historical juncture moving from scale leadership to value leadership, which is full of opportunities and challenges, Wang believes.

The domestic shipbuilding industry's rapid development has created the world's most complete industrial chain with good technological support and abundant talent.

"More importantly, it is an extremely healthy industry, allowing us to further develop and innovate the incremental market of cruise shipbuilding," said Yi.

Qin Qi, a senior engineer at the Marine Design & Research Institute of China said, "The process of China transitioning from the world's largest shipbuilder to a maritime power is unstoppable."

"Strong support from the Chinese government, the gigantic domestic market, its complete industrial and manufacturing (base), and collaborative strengths guarantee the rise and rapid development of the country's shipbuilding industry," Qin said.

"In the meantime, the market mechanism allows China's shipbuilding industry to be competitive internationally through efficiency and quality.

"En route to becoming a world-class maritime power and shipbuilding power requires further reform and opening-up, and making quality, efficiency and technological advancement the priorities in every single task of shipbuilding," Qin said.

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The 27,000-ton bulk carrier *Regent Tampopo* delivered in January 1982, was a breakthrough for the Chinese industry. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS



Medical supplies meant for earthquake-affected Myanmar are loaded onto an aircraft on Tuesday at the Dehong Mangshi International Airport in Yunnan province. The supplies, worth more than 240,000 yuan (\$33,013), were donated by the Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture in Yunnan, to support the relief work in Myanmar. CHEN XINBO / XINHUA

Over 500 Chinese rescuers aid Myanmar in relief efforts

By YAN DONGJIE and WEI XIAOHAO in Mandalay, Myanmar and LI SHANGYI in Beijing

\$206,000 cash aid

China's swift response to the earthquake in Myanmar and its continuous support for rescue and relief efforts, including the deployment of the largest number of rescue teams and personnel, have been widely recognized by the government and people of the Southeast Asian country.

was provided by the Red Cross Society of China toward Myanmar relief works, while Yunnan has donated 6.1 million yuan worth of disaster relief supplies

the time of rescue, the ministry said. On Tuesday, Mandalay Mayor U Kyaw Hsan expressed his gratitude in person to members of the Chinese civil rescue team Ramunion.

Li Ming, spokesman for the China International Development Cooperation Agency, said on Wednesday that nearly 30 Chinese rescue teams, comprising over 500 personnel, are currently assisting rescue and relief efforts in Myanmar.

During the dayslong cross-border rescue operation, the team searched 26 collapsed buildings, rescuing five survivors and recovering 12 bodies in 72 hours. Local residents spontaneously brought tea and fruit for the team as a gesture of appreciation.

"We deployed rescue teams within the critical 72-hour window. Following the principle of proximity, a rescue team from Yunnan province reached Myanmar within 18 hours of the earthquake," Li said.

According to Li, despite disruptions to transportation and communication networks, the first shipment of China's emergency humanitarian aid, including 1,200 tents, 8,000 blankets and over 40,000 first-aid kits, was delivered to Myanmar's capital, Nay Pyi Daw, on Tuesday for distribution among displaced residents.

As of Wednesday evening, Chinese teams had rescued nine survivors, according to China's Ministry of Emergency Management.

The second shipment of relief supplies from China, including 800 tents, 2,000 blankets, 3,000 boxes of biscuits and 2,000 boxes of bottled water, is scheduled to be

The ninth survivor — a man trapped under rubble in Mandalay for over 120 hours — was rescued by the Chinese national rescue team and the China International Search and Rescue Team at 5:40 pm local time. He was in stable condition at

shipped on Thursday, he said.

The Red Cross Society of China has also provided 1.5 million yuan (\$206,000) in cash aid, while Yunnan has donated 6.1 million yuan worth of disaster relief supplies, he added.

In Mandalay, many people whose homes were destroyed in the magnitude 7.9 earthquake that struck Myanmar on Friday are now living outdoors.

"We need temporary shelters such as tents," said U Kyaw Kyaw, a resident who is currently sleeping on a mat on the riverbank. "I have seen the rescue teams from China working here. I want to thank them."

Shen Tingchong, from the Red Cross Society of China, said that while one team is supporting rescue operations, another is preparing for the construction of temporary shelters for the displaced people, including setting up toilets and water supply facilities.

"We will also carry out a disinfection drive, as post-disaster infectious diseases also need to be taken seriously," Shen added.

Zhang Guangrui, leader of the Blue Sky Rescue Team from China, said his squad has been searching for two days for an 84-year-old woman trapped under a collapsed building in Mandalay. "We are sparing no efforts. As victims are scat-

tered in different places, many civil rescue forces and volunteers are required," he said.

Ma Yuehua, the victim's daughter, said the rescue team consulted with her and her family members about the building's structure before deciding on their next course of action. "I really want to see my mother as soon as possible. The Chinese rescue team has been helping us for two days. I am grateful for their tireless efforts," she added.

Li Yanlin, a third-generation Chinese immigrant in Myanmar, said, "We are very grateful to all the Chinese rescue teams for coming to help us."

Li Ming, from the China International Development Cooperation Agency, said that China is willing to continue supporting the people in Myanmar according to their needs.

"We believe that with the joint efforts of China and the international community, the people of Myanmar will soon overcome the disaster and rebuild their homes," he said.

According to Myanmar's State Administration Council, the earthquake has resulted in more than 3,000 deaths and 4,515 injuries. As of Wednesday, 649 people had been rescued and 351 were still missing.

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China remains attractive for US investors

Chamber of commerce head confident about opportunities offered by nation to businesses

By ZHONG NAN zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China will remain an attractive market for companies from the United States, as the country's focus on technological innovation, electric vehicles and biotechnology continues to offer significant opportunities for US businesses, said the head of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.



Michael Hart

viewed rising tensions in China-US relations as the top business challenge of US companies in China, according to the report.

Noting that the chamber is not in favor of widespread tariffs, Hart said AmCham China advocates constructive dialogue and policy predictability to reduce volatility in trade relations. "Ensuring that businesses can operate competitively and with greater certainty benefits both economies and supports global economic stability," said Hart.

To foster long-term stability and mutual benefit, US businesses would like to see greater transparency, predictability and reciprocity in trade policies. Priorities include strengthening government-to-government dialogue and reducing trade barriers, he added.

China's push for high-tech self-sufficiency and industrial upgrading presents challenges as well as opportunities for US businesses, said Michael Hart, president of AmCham China, in a recent interview with China Daily.

In the first two months of 2025, the US remained China's third-largest trading partner, with the total trade value between the two countries reaching 733.67 billion yuan (\$101 billion), up 3.5 percent year-on-year, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

AmCham China is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization with around 800 member companies operating across China, including Coca-Cola, Pfizer, Qualcomm, Honeywell, Walmart and Dell Technologies.

Speaking on China's evolving industrial landscape, Judy Marks, chairwoman, CEO and president of Otis Worldwide Corp, reaffirmed the Farmington, Connecticut-based group's commitment to continued investment in China, especially in manufacturing and digitalization.

To facilitate their growth, Hart said that US businesses should ensure strict compliance with both US and Chinese regulations to mitigate risks, invest in research and development tailored to the Chinese market, and leverage global expertise while adapting to local conditions.

Marks highlighted that, since 2008, China's rapid urbanization has driven annual growth of about 1.5 million in-service elevators. By 2024, nearly 1 million elevators had reached their aging replacement period — defined as 15 years or older — a trend that is expected to continue through the end of the decade.

In addition, the chamber will continue to facilitate business networking and knowledge-sharing by providing platforms for members to exchange insights on how to adapt to China's evolving market dynamics, he added.

Lorenzo Simonelli, chairman and CEO of US energy group Baker Hughes, expressed strong confidence in China's economic outlook and advancements in energy innovation, emphasizing that the country's drive toward industrial upgrading and green development is unlocking substantial opportunities.

About 87 percent of surveyed member companies of AmCham China stressed the great importance of a constructive bilateral relationship for their operations in China. In the technology, research and development sector, one of four main subsections of the chamber's membership, this figure rose to as high as 95 percent, according to the "2025 China Business Climate Survey Report" released by AmCham China in late January.

"We look forward to deepening our investment and collaboration in China, with the aim of delivering more high-quality solutions to support both China's transformation and global energy needs," he said.

More than half of US respondents said they plan to increase investments in China this year, and about 63 percent of enterprises surveyed

To maintain its appeal to global investors in the long run, China will further open up internet-related, cultural and other sectors in a well-regulated manner and expand pilot programs to open areas such as telecommunications, medical services, according to this year's Government Work Report.

AI: Infrastructure prioritized as primary driver of progress

From page 1

This shift may still lead to some relaxation in digital regulations in both China and Europe. Europe has withdrawn its long-announced AI Liability Directive and has pledged regulatory "simplification".

China's tech giant Huawei's 5G-Advanced is an AI-centric network platform, already deployed by more than 60 mobile operators globally, enabling the uplink velocity and low latency required for industrial upgrades to power AI-driven robotics and manufacturing.

Council to further reduce supply chain dependencies and win the strategic competition with China over 5G and 6G.

Digital sovereignty

Digital sovereignty is today's defining policy strategy, where investment and governance decisions in digital transformation should benefit society and promote shared prosperity. It is not only about independent policy choices but building capacity and enhancing technological capability, without resorting to protectionism and coercion.

and Safety Network and Global AI Governance Initiative, China is actively seeking collaboration on the safety and security of AI, further emphasizing its approach to shared leadership.

The Global South countries can benefit from such a "Digital Westphalia", build upon their own sovereign strategies and bridge their digital divides.

This would stand in stark contrast not only to today but also to history, when a few Western countries maintained a telecommunications monopoly throughout much of the 20th century, making it nearly impossible for latecomer countries to break through such asymmetry — except for China.

Meanwhile, China will continue to pursue an issue-based, sector-focused approach.

That Huawei pursues such an infrastructure-first approach to AI is no coincidence. It reflects China's broader development model, which has always prioritized infrastructure as the primary driver of progress.

In March, the Cyberspace Administration of China announced a new regulation, to take effect in September, requiring that all AI-generated content be clearly labeled to combat misinformation and to promote transparency in digital media.

Unfortunately, 5G is at the center of geopolitical tensions, which not only delays its deployment and upgrades, but also hinders efforts to make networks more cybersecurity, as the proper approach requires implementing policies, international standards and transparent practices.

Shared leadership

While the US still leads in frontier AI, China is closely following but is ahead in 5G and shaping 6G standards. China is also making significant strides in 5G-AI integration.

The US' latest measure is the formation of a National Security

China is on course to become a global AI innovation center by 2030. Should Chinese AI companies continue pursuing an open-source strategy, China won't be the next AI hegemon but would foster a more inclusive form of dominance.

Through its AI Development

The author is a senior fellow and Europe director at the Beijing-based think tank Taihe Institute. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Visit: Exchanges at various levels expected within the year

From page 1

Before this Russia trip, the world has seen major changes such as signs of the thawing of ties between Moscow and Washington and the ravaging trade war escalated by the current administration of the United States, experts noted.

researcher at the China Institute of International Studies, said that Wang's visit is key because the international situation "has undergone profound and complex changes this year, making it even more necessary for China and Russia to step up and deepen their comprehensive strategic communication".

beneficial to the development of bilateral relations, but also conducive to world peace and stability, as well as to stabilizing the situation in the Eurasian region.

"Also, both China and Russia are carrying out their respective diplomatic mediation efforts on Middle East issues," he said.

second meeting with Lavrov this year. The previous meeting took place in February on the sidelines of the G20 foreign ministers' meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

According to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry about the ministers' meeting in Moscow, the two sides agreed to "prepare solidly for exchanges at various levels with-

in the year" and deepen practical cooperation in various fields to better underpin the entire relationship.

They also pledged to enhance coordination within multinational frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, the G20 and the United Nations to jointly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Global South countries.

Xing Guangcheng, director of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Chinese Borderland

Studies, said, "There is a great deal of uncertainty in the world, but there is one great certainty and that's China-Russia relations."

Xing said the ties "are in the best shape of all time", and that China-Russia cooperation in the new era "enjoys a strong, self-driven impetus".

China-Russia ties do not target third parties and are not affected by them, and their good neighborly relations featuring "friendship for generations" have had a constant effect, he said.

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CHINA

Fudan team develops new kind of chips

Breakthrough likely to end reliance on traditional silicon-based ones

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Researchers in Shanghai have developed the world's largest integrated two-dimensional semiconductor microprocessor, a breakthrough that could revolutionize the industry by replacing traditional silicon-based chips with molybdenum disulfide, or MoS₂.

The micro CPU, called WUJI, integrates a record-breaking 5,900 transistors, far surpassing the previous world record of 115. The more transistors a chip contains, the greater its data processing capability, scientists said.

The research was led by Zhou Peng and Bao Wenzhong of Fudan University's State Key Laboratory of Integrated Chips and Systems, and the findings were published in the journal Nature on Thursday.

The development comes as Moore's Law — the principle that the number of transistors on a microchip doubles about every two years — is approaching its physical limits. Two-dimensional semiconductors, with atomic-scale thickness, are seen internationally as a key solution to sustaining progress in microprocessor technology.

After more than a decade of efforts by researchers worldwide, scientists have mastered wafer-level 2D material growth and successfully manufactured high-performance components with features only a few hundred atoms long and a few atomic layers thick.

However, building complete integrated circuits with such atomic-level precision has long been hindered by challenges in maintaining accuracy and uniformity at scale. Until now, the highest integration level had remained in the hundreds of transistors, without crossing the technical threshold of functional processors.

After five years of research and development, the Fudan University team created WUJI using the 32-bit RISC-V architecture and MoS₂. By employing innovative processing techniques and the open-source RISC-V instruction set, WUJI set a global record for 2D logic function verification, integrating 5,900 transistors.

The researchers completed the entire chain of independent research and development, from materials to architecture and chip design.

"Controlled by 32-bit input instructions, WUJI can perform addition and subtraction operations on numbers up to 4.2 billion, support gigabyte-level data storage and access, and execute up to a billion simplified instruction set commands," Zhou said.

The Fudan team has spent more than a decade researching 2D semiconductor integrated circuits. Their AI-driven optimization technology, which combines atomic-level precision control with full-process AI algorithm optimization, allowed for precise control from material growth to integrated processing, researchers said.

The complex technological process of WUJI made it difficult to manually set parameters, but by integrating machine learning, the research team quickly optimized key parameters and improved transistor yield, Zhou said.

About 70 percent of the processes used in WUJI's 2D semiconductor integration can directly adopt mature technologies from existing silicon-based production lines, while the core 2D processes are protected by more than 20 process invention patents.

The researchers have also developed a specialized technical system, paving the way for future industrialization.

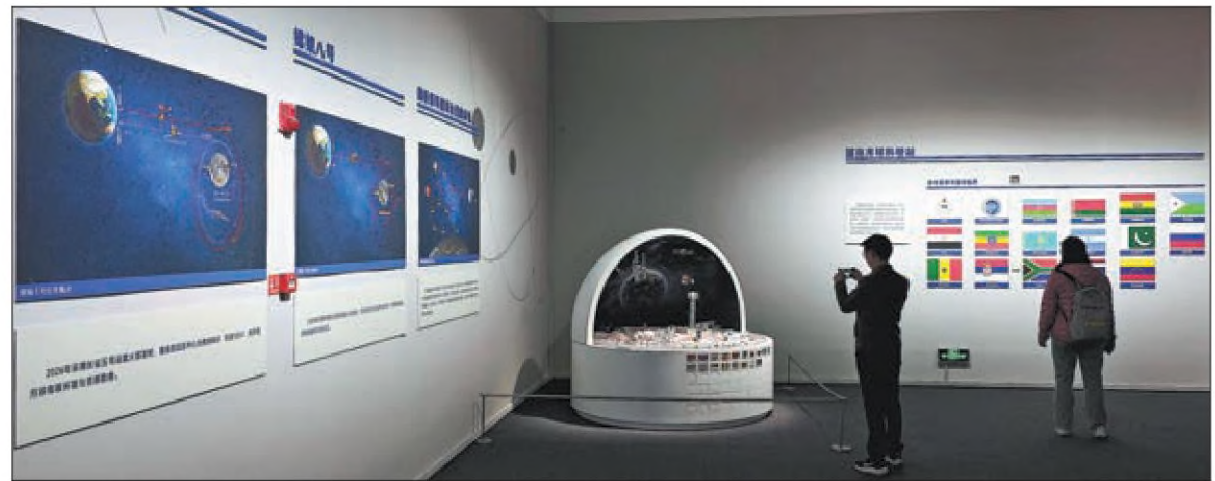
In their study, the inverter yield — the percentage of produced chips that function correctly — reached 99.77 percent, and both integrated process optimization and large-scale circuit verification achieved the highest international standards.

"We have achieved nanometer-level power consumption using micrometer-level processes. A low-power CPU can help drive broader applications of artificial intelligence," Zhou said.

AI requires significant power for reasoning and training, and energy consumption is a major limitation on computing power expansion, he said.

"By using new computing architectures that enable low-power operation, we can potentially boost AI capabilities," Zhou said.

Precious collection



Visitors view exhibits showcasing the blueprint of China's future lunar exploration plans displayed at the 20 Years of Chinese Lunar Exploration Program Exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing on Wednesday. The exhibition opened to the public on Tuesday. This two-month event features samples from both the near and far sides of the moon, showcasing over 100 precious objects, text materials and images for the first time collectively. SU DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Fatal car crash in Anhui raises public concern over use of smart driving

By ZHAO YIMENG
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A fatal car accident involving a Xiaomi SU7 electric car on a highway in Anhui province on Saturday night has sparked widespread discussion about the safety of the vehicle's autonomous driving system and fire risks.

The crash occurred on a section of the Dezhou-Shangrao Expressway, where a standard edition Xiaomi SU7 reportedly collided with a concrete barrier in a roadworks zone before catching fire, resulting in the death of all three people in the vehicle.

Lei Jun, founder of Xiaomi, expressed deep condolences to the victims' families on social media on Tuesday night, promising that the company would fully cooperate with the authorities in the investigation of the accident.

"Many questions cannot be answered right now because the company has not yet had access to the vehicle involved," Lei said. "I must step forward and make a commitment on behalf of Xiaomi. No matter what happens, Xiaomi will not evade responsibility," he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, the company issued an official statement via its spokesperson's account on Sina Weibo, responding to online speculation regarding the vehicle's autopilot capabilities, battery fire and door-locking systems.

According to data released by Xiaomi, the vehicle was traveling at 116 kilometers per hour using its Navigate on Autopilot function before detecting an obstacle ahead. The system then issued a prompt for the driver to take control and avoid the obstruction.

"The driver reacted within one second, adjusting the steering and

"I must step forward and make a commitment on behalf of Xiaomi. No matter what happens, Xiaomi will not evade responsibility."

Lei Jun, founder of Xiaomi

braking, but the car collided with a concrete guardrail the next second. The final recorded speed before the crash was 97 km/h," the statement said.

Emergency rescue measures were immediately activated, including contacting emergency services and calling for medical assistance. On Monday, the company submitted vehicle operation data to the police for investigation, the company stated.

The owner of the vehicle told Shanghai-based news portal ThePaper.cn on Monday that one of the victims was his girlfriend, surnamed Luo. His vehicle, a standard edition Xiaomi SU7, was delivered in Wuhan, Hubei province, and was mainly used by Luo.

The three female passengers, who were former classmates, were near their destination when the crash occurred. He last spoke with Luo at around 10 pm on the night of the accident, he said.

Luo's mother said her daughter was using the vehicle's intelligent driving system at the time, noting the difficulty of manually taking over the car in such an emergency

within two seconds.

She recalled receiving a notification on her phone at 10:45 pm, informing her that the vehicle, which was linked to her mobile account, had been involved in a major crash. The family immediately drove to the scene in Anhui, arriving at around 2:40 am the next day.

After Lei released the statement, Luo's father urged the company to provide more transparency.

"Lives have been lost," he said. "We need a more detailed explanation."

The families called for a full investigation into potential safety risks associated with the Xiaomi SU7, emphasizing the need for lessons to be learned to prevent future tragedies.

The fatal crash has raised alarms about the risks of smart driving. As 2025 is regarded as the first year of nationwide smart driving, advanced driver-assistance capabilities have become a key factor for Chinese automakers to stay competitive.

While the industry sees rapid development, safety concerns are rising. A survey conducted by news portal Guancha.cn revealed that only 25 percent of consumers had received adequate training on smart driving, while 41 percent said they had never undergone related training.

Meanwhile, consumer interest in advanced smart driving remains strong. The survey found that 83 percent of respondents said higher-level autonomous features would influence their decisions to buy a car, according to Economic Observer.

According to automobile consultancy Dongchedi, as of Friday, more than 130,000 Xiaomi SU7s had been sold since the vehicle launched in March last year.

Briefly

Illegal production caused factory blast

Illegal production led to an explosion at a biotechnology company in Xiangcheng, Henan province, that killed six people and injured three on March 20, authorities said on Wednesday. The blast at Sandeli Biotechnology in Xiangcheng occurred when excessive temperatures during the distillation process in a reaction vessel caused compounds to decompose and explode, according to the Ministry of Emergency Management. A preliminary investigation found that the company had subleased its factory building from another business and was operating unlawfully.

More relief offered for workplace hazards

China has raised the minimum compensation for workplace accident-related deaths or disabilities from 300,000 yuan to 400,000 yuan (\$41,273 to \$55,400) under a revised workplace safety insurance regulation, the Ministry of Emergency Management said on Tuesday. The updated Workplace Safety Liability Insurance Implementation Measures, jointly issued by seven government agencies, has also expanded coverage and streamlined claims processing. Employers in high-risk industries, including mining, hazardous chemicals, fireworks, transportation and metal smelting, must insure all employees without discrimination based on job type or employment status. The regulation introduces a fast-track claims mechanism for major or high-profile accidents, allowing insurers to make prompt or advance payments as required by law and policy terms.

CHINA DAILY

Organ donors honored in Shenyang

By WU YONG in Shenyang
and WANG XIAOYU in Beijing

When Zhang Dingyu, learned about registering as an organ donor in 2022 from a fellow patient, he signed up immediately.

"Despite my disease, my kidneys, liver and heart could be of use to other patients. Moreover, as a patient with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, donating my body can help advance research into the disease," said Zhang, a former hospital president in Wuhan, Hubei province, known for his contributions to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and his personal battle against ALS, a fatal motor neuron disease.

His remarks were made during an event held on Tuesday to honor organ donors ahead of this year's Tomb Sweeping Day on Friday.

During the event held by the China Organ Donation Administrative



People lay flowers in front of an organ donation memorial monument as a sign of respect for the dedication of donors in Loudi, Hunan province, on Monday. GUO GUOQUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Center in Shenyang, Liaoning province, Zhang was also appointed as a national ambassador for organ donation promotion to spread awareness about other causes.

The number of registered organ donors in China has exceeded 7.05 million, up by about 33,500 from a year ago, according to the latest data released by the center on Tuesday.

China began establishing a voluntary organ donation system in 2010 and made voluntary donation the only legitimate source of transplantable organs in 2015.

To date, the nation has carried out 58,000 posthumous organ donations, 63,000 body donations and more than 110,000 corneal donations, said the center.

As a result, the lives of around 170,000 patients with organ failure have been saved, and more than 100,000 individuals have regained their eyesight, it added.

To honor organ donors, more than 280 memorial sites have been built across the nation, the center said.

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Crackdown on 'fandom' intensified

By LIANG SHUANG
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China's cyberspace watchdogs recently intensified their campaign against toxic sports "fandom" by cleaning up 1.6 million pieces of related illegal information and shutting down nearly 4,000 online accounts, regulators said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Cyberspace Administration of China stated that by punishing related accounts — as well as those that profit from illegally selling personal information, schedules or sports gear bearing fake signatures of star athletes — they aim to create a good environment for athletes who are training and preparing for matches, and ensure that sports events organizers can perform their duties smoothly.

According to the administration, it mainly targeted fandom accounts that were engaged in three types of behavior: "pack" leaders that frequently and maliciously insult rival athletes and coaches; those that provoked arguments and drew views by maliciously interpreting athletes' actions out of context or making sensational narratives about nonexistent romantic relationships; and those that pretended to belong to athletes or coaches and

established fan groups to push for irrational rallying, from which they profited.

In total, approximately 76,000 accounts were penalized, including 3,767 that were permanently shut down, the administration said, adding that it also took down 123 pieces of sports memorabilia branded as signed by athletes, which in reality used counterfeit signatures, and shut down six online shops.

In a previously singled-out incident, the General Administration of Sport of China strongly condemned such fandom behavior in late February after insults were made on-site and online following the 34th ITTF-ATTU Asian Cup. At the time, star table tennis players were insulted during and after the match when the match results became unbearable for some fans.

In the past, some players including Olympic gold medalists Wang Chuqin and Fan Zhendong had called for respect for their privacy after their personal information and schedules were leaked online.

Olympic gold medalist diver Quan Hongchan also spoke out, asking spectators to respect her personal time.

Kenneth Fok Kai-kong, a Hong Kong deputy to the National Peo-

ple's Congress and a renowned sponsor of sports events, called such behavior "hunting rather than star-chasing" in a televised interview with China Central Television during the two sessions last month, urging people to resist such behavior.

The cyberspace administration said that it would continue to monitor platforms and punish such accounts, and cooperate with sports management authorities to establish a joint mechanism to avoid similar actions in the future. It added that tip-offs on behaviors that may constitute crimes have been transferred to relevant authorities for further investigation.

Separately, police at Beijing Capital International Airport said that they had given administrative penalties to 31 people this year for disrupting public order by gathering and taking photos of stars illegally, the Ministry of Public Security said in a statement on Tuesday.

The police said that some entertainment companies failed to guide fans correctly, which led to disruptive fan gatherings at the airport. The police asked involved companies to rectify and resist irrational idol-chasing, warning that those breaching the law would be held responsible.



From left: Skiers enjoy the snow at Beidahu Ski Resort in Jilin city, Jilin province. Scores of competitors participate in a race at the 23rd China Changchun Jingyuetan Vasaloppet International Ski Festival in Changchun, Jilin. Two red-crowned cranes relax in shallow waters in the province. Combine harvesters collect rice from black soil paddy fields at a farm in Jilin. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



JILIN PROVINCE'S VIBRANT CULTURE MAKES A SPLASH

Ecological gem of a mountain range, cultural heritage sites and ethnic diversity just some of the highlights offered by area in Northeast China

Changbaishan Global Geopark, renowned for its quaternary volcanic landforms, is on the list of the Global Geoparks Network by UNESCO. WANG GUOXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



The millennia-old tradition of ice fishing on Chagan Lake has won new fans thanks to the booming winter tourism industry.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On the world's golden latitude belt for snow and ice, featuring the European Alps and the North American Rockies, there is another famous mountain range: Changbai Mountain in Jilin province in Northeast China.

Changbai Mountain serves as a key ecological barrier in Northeast Asia. It has a long winter season with abundant snow. Here lies Tianchi, the highest crater lake in the world, resembling a blue gem set in the beautiful mountain's peak. This sacred mountain also has reserves of high-quality ginseng, deer antlers, mineral water and Songhua inkstones.

Just as the Danube River nurtured the European civilization, the renowned Changbai Mountain, as the source of the Songhua River, Tumen River and Yalu River, nourishes a brilliant culture. The tradition of ice fishing on Jilin's Chagan Lake was recognized as a national-level intangible cultural heritage item in China. From 37 BC to 668 AD, the ancient kingdom Goguryeo established its capital here. Several loca-

tions in Jilin province, containing early Goguryeo ruins and tombs, were collectively designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. The province is also home to the largest concentration of ethnic groups in Northeast China — the Jilin Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture — which adds vibrancy to the regional culture of Jilin.

Jilin is located in one of the world's three major black soil regions, which are known for their rich organic carbon content. In 2024, Jilin's grain output reached 42.66 billion kilograms, ranking first in single crop yield for three consecutive years among China's major grain-producing provinces.

Leveraging its ecological and cultural resources, the local government is committed to creating globally-known ice and snow brands, tourist destinations and summer resorts. In 2024, the province achieved tourism revenue of 635 billion yuan (\$87.4 billion), up about 20 percent year-on-year. It received 388 million visits from domestic and foreign tourists, making Jilin an increasingly important choice for global visitors.



In autumn, the scenery around the Jilin section of the G331 Highway is transformed into a sea of red and brown leaves.

ADVERTORIAL

WORLD

Funding cuts shock US colleges

Insiders warn of wasted research, reduced admissions, risks for academic freedom

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas
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Gracie Hines, a senior at West Virginia University, was looking forward to working on her PhD in pharmaceutical research at the school this year. She was already admitted.

Then, she got an email that her admission had been rescinded due to federal budget cuts.

"I got my dream taken away from me today," she posted on Facebook on March 3 along with a screenshot of the notification. "I am confused and heartbroken. I have no idea what to do next."

The US higher education system is losing large amounts of federal funding on multiple fronts: programs involving the US Agency for International Development, or USAID; the National Institutes of Health, or NIH; and the diversity, equity and inclusion frameworks, or DEI. Some are losing grants based on alleged antisemitism.

Facing deep cuts and fund freezes by the Trump administration, US colleges and universities are laying off staff, rescinding PhD offers, freezing recruitment and pay raises, restricting business travels, and reducing research and graduate programs.

"The academic model on which the universities relied to conduct their research, to fund their students, to fund postgraduate students — all this is in crisis, because a lot of it, in some way, was funded through federal grants," Aseem Prakash, a political scientist at the University of Washington in Seattle, told the journal Nature. "This is a massive shock."

Overall, US taxpayers fund an estimated \$81 billion a year in academic scientific research and development, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

In mid-March, Johns Hopkins University announced that it was laying off more than 2,200 people and furloughing another 100 on a reduced schedule because of budget cuts — the largest layoff in the institution's history.

A lot of those jobs were funded by USAID and are outside the US. With USAID dismantled by President Donald Trump, Johns Hopkins lost \$800 million in funding.

Many funds from NIH and DEI programs were also halted the day Trump took office.

NIH, the largest government research funding agency in the US, issued \$35 billion in grants to more than 2,500 medical research institutes in the 2023 fiscal year.

In early February, NIH issued new guidance to cap indirect research costs at 15 percent, down from the average indirect cost rate of 27 to 28 percent. That means a total reduction of \$4 billion in funding.

In the first two months of the Trump administration, more than 300 NIH grants were terminated and \$1.5 billion in funding delayed, Monica Bertagnolli, former director of NIH under the Biden administration, said at a recent forum organized by Senator Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat from Wisconsin.

She said that NIH-funded advances have contributed to reductions



Protesters gather during a demonstration at the headquarters of the Department of Education in Washington on March 14. MARK SCHIEFFELBEIN / AP



Police officers stand guard outside Columbia University in New York on May 2. YUKI IWAMURA / AP

in death rates from cancer, heart attacks and strokes in the US. With projects being canceled midstream, years of research data would likely be wasted and the role of the NIH as the world's leading funder of biomedical research was at risk.

Whitney Wharton, an Alzheimer's researcher at Emory University, said: "These cuts are very, very devastating and they're very scary for young investigators, for students, whether they've been affected or not. These young scientists may leave research altogether because they're nervous."

Major consequences

It might be happening already.

"I hear anecdotally now all the time of people who are not coming to the US as international students because of fears," Lee Bollinger, Columbia's president emeritus, told CNN. "There is evidence of this in schools where applications are down considerably from various countries, with major consequences for the financial bottom line of various schools and departments, but also for the richness of our educational system."

Trump has also scrapped DEI programs that provided funding for scholarships and housing to groups who have historically been underrepresented or discriminated

against. The federal government not only cut more than \$350 million in related grants but also cut some schools' funding over DEI policies.

On March 25, the University of Pennsylvania stopped receiving \$175 million federal funding after it allowed a transgender woman to compete in sports. A spokesperson said the university does not have a specific policy for transgender athletes and follows NCAA and Ivy League conference guidance.

The university also faces another potential \$240 million cut if NIH moves forward with a newly capped indirect cost rate of 15 percent. It has decided to significantly reduce graduate admission rates.

Some universities have lost funding due to student protests over Israel's campaign in Gaza, which the Trump administration called "antisemitism". The federal government recently canceled \$400 million in grants and contracts with the Columbia University over the issue.

About 60 universities are under civil rights investigation for potential "antisemitic discrimination and harassment", including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Arizona State and Ohio State.

Columbia officials have bowed to the government's demands, agreeing to hire more police officers and

give them more power to arrest students; ban face masks except for religious or medical reasons; adopt an updated definition of antisemitism and appoint a new senior vice provost to oversee its Center for Palestine Studies and the departments of Middle East, South Asian and African studies.

However, Columbia's concession is only a "precondition for formal negotiations" to continue its "financial relationship with the US government," the government said in its letter to the school.

While the federal government called Columbia's concession a "positive first step", labor unions representing professors and other educators sued the Trump administration over the \$400 million cancellation last week, accusing the White House of leveraging the funds to interfere with free speech and academic independence.

"This action challenges the Trump administration's unlawful and unprecedented effort to overpower a university's academic autonomy and control the thought, association, scholarship and expression of its faculty and students," said the lawsuit filed jointly by the American Association of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers.

"We're seeing university leadership across the country failing to take any action to counter the Trump administration's unlawful assault on academic freedom," Reinhold Martin, a Columbia professor of architecture, said in a news release.

There have been multiple lawsuits in the courts over academic funding freezes from NIH and other federal agencies.

Universities face funding losses not only at the federal level but also at the state level. In Texas, when both the House and the Senate unveiled their state budget proposals a month ago, both included an item eliminating the institutional enhancement fund that provided \$423 million to universities in the last budget cycle.

Agencies contributed to the story.

More African youth seek higher studies in China

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
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The number of African students opting to travel to China for further studies has witnessed incredible growth over the past decade, with experts attributing the increase to growing economic and cultural exchanges between the regions.

Henry Rotich, chairman of the Kenya-China Alumni Association, said this growth is driven by several factors, including expanded scholarship opportunities, China's affordability as a study destination and the rising demand for African professionals with Chinese language proficiency.

"In Kenya, for example, the Chinese government used to offer an average of 10 scholarships per year twenty years ago. Today, the Chinese embassy in Nairobi alone sponsors at least 60 students annually," said Rotich, who studied in China for his master's degree in chemistry back in 1998.

"Additionally, private universities, local governments and self-sponsored students account for more than half of the total Kenyan student population in China. This reflects a multifold increase over the past two decades," he added.

Beyond long-term scholarships for undergraduate, master's and PhD studies, Chinese companies operating in Africa also sponsor students for short-term training, further boosting the numbers.

According to Rotich, China has emerged as a cost-effective destination compared with other international study venues, leading to an increase in self-sponsored and privately sponsored students opting for further studies in China.

Studying in China not only provides students with academic qualifications but also immerses them in a new language and culture, enhancing their global competitiveness, he said.

Different levels

Rotich said the number of African students in China has been boosted by the fact that students nowadays go to China for different levels of study — like bachelor's and master's degree programs as well as doctoral studies.

There are also opportunities for certificate and diploma-level programs. These include specialized cultural and professional training in areas such as *wushu* (martial arts), research and development

collaborations between African and Chinese universities as well as technical training programs in engineering, technology and business.

"The rise in number of Kenyan graduates from China has led to significant contributions to various sectors in the country. These include infrastructure and engineering like engaging in major projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway," Rotich said.

"They are also making contributions in government and public service, the private sector and business as well as education by teaching the Chinese language in schools, universities and Confucius Institutes."

Joseph Maritim, treasurer of the Kenya-China Alumni Association, pointed out that prospects for Africa-China educational collaboration are promising. The association is working closely with both the Kenyan and Chinese governments to pursue further cooperation.

"We are seeking increased investment in vocational training to meet Kenya's growing labor market needs. We are also working on enhanced joint research initiatives between Kenyan and Chinese institutions. We will strengthen bilateral agreements to facilitate smoother transitions for students and professionals," Maritim said.

He added that the exchange of knowledge is not a one-way road. Some Chinese students, often due to their parents relocating to Africa for business or employment, take advantage of existing exchange programs to study in Kenyan public and private universities.

Additionally, personal interest in African studies has led some Chinese students to seek education in Kenya, facilitating cultural and academic exchanges between the two nations.

To further expand the cooperation in education, Maritim said they are working to strengthen alumni engagement and networking, to create strong and structured support for returning graduates in the Kenyan job market as well as to create institutionalized exchange programs and government-backed initiatives.

"As cooperation between the two nations deepens, education will remain a crucial pillar of the Kenya-China relationship, ensuring mutual growth and development," Maritim said.



A Kenyan student tries traditional Chinese painting at the Yanching Institute of Technology in Langfang, Hebei province, on Dec 10. Eleven youth representatives from Kenya visited the institute under a China-Africa youth exchange program. WANG XIAO / XINHUA

Chinese students in Australia face rapidly changing job market

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Chinese students in Australia face a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive job market at home and abroad but their overseas study and cross-cultural experience still offer opportunities for employment, according to the latest research and analysis.

Australia remains a favored education destination, but students from China, who comprise the largest group in the country's foreign student population, encounter growing challenges when transitioning from the classroom to the workplace, according to scholars' findings in the education research group of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney.

Their report, which was presented on Monday and focused on the employability of students, highlighted key areas like changes in the

evolving recruitment criteria and the role of digital and technological channels such as artificial intelligence in the hiring process.

Amid the challenges of a tight job market in China, "overseas graduate degrees are no longer the 'golden ticket' to employment they once were," lead researcher Wei Li said.

"Soft skills such as job interviews and networking are more important than ever, and our research found stark differences in what is needed between the Australian and Chinese job markets," Li said, adding that "there is a universal expectation for candidates to be well-prepared, qualified and committed to their roles."

She said that "it is important for students to take responsibility for their career planning and prepare themselves with the skills they will need for the country and industry they have in mind".

Education is one of Australia's

main export industries, with more than 188,300 students from the Chinese mainland alone enrolled in Australian educational institutions as of November. At 22 percent that is the largest group in its foreign student population, the report cited industry figures as showing.

In their report, the university researchers analyzed internship and graduate program recruitment requirements from 62 leading companies in Australia and 45 in China, responses from an Australian graduate outcomes survey, and in-depth interviews with 10 employers and human resources experts in both countries.

Participating in a panel discussion at the launch of the report, Grozdana Manalo, career services manager at the University of Sydney Business School, said for the students, "it doesn't matter whether they're local or international, the number one barrier ... is access to

information and networks".

International students, without their established home networks and access to information, may appear "potentially less capable or able" — which is not the case, Manalo said.

According to the researchers' report, industries in both Australia and China generally welcomed Chinese students as they aimed to enter the workforce.

Key concern

But visa-related access to employment outside a student's home country was still a key concern for Australian companies' recruitment of international students, the report noted.

In terms of technological changes, the increasing use of digital platforms with more traditional methods like campus recruitment, referrals and networking, saw some common ground in recruitment channels in Australia and China,

with both sides tapping AI in the initial screening and interviewing process.

The researchers also made recommendations for universities and employers to help graduates in the job market.

"We would like to see every university ensure that career development is embedded as a learning outcome throughout every degree, and foster environments that challenge students to reflect on how they want to be perceived professionally," Li said.

"Equally, industry needs to engage with educational institutions to provide mentorship and internships, and design graduate programs that consider the unique strengths and needs of Chinese graduates," she said.

Amy Guo, an educational counselor with Aoji company, which provides education services for Chinese students in Australia, said jobseek-

ers now have a wide variety of options, whether to return home for work or explore opportunities abroad.

"Many students will choose to go back and work, but their competitive skill sets, such as bilingualism, can be very advantageous and leveraged, especially with the Chinese community and its many businesses here in Australia," Guo said.

"Chinese students are intelligent and diligent, and those with complementary cross-cultural experiences continue to be very much in demand," she said.

For finance major Chen Xuanmo, 25, the growing opportunities in China mean that returning home for work is the obvious choice after he completes his graduate studies in New South Wales this year.

"China is an economic powerhouse and Australia has major economic ties with it," said Chen. "Chinese students who have spent time abroad have a lot to offer for the development of both sides, whether in terms of work or cultural exchange."

ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

TIME TO LEND A HAND

Myanmar earthquake survivors without food, drinking water and shelter as death toll rises

Aid groups in the worst-hit areas of Myanmar said there was an urgent need for shelter, food and water after an earthquake that killed more than 2,800 people as of Tuesday.

The death toll is expected to rise to more than 3,000, Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing said in a televised address on Tuesday. He said 4,521 people were injured, and 441 were missing.

The 7.7 magnitude quake, which hit around lunchtime on Friday, was the strongest to hit the Southeast Asian country in more than a century, toppling ancient pagodas and modern buildings alike.

"In the hardest-hit areas ... communities struggle to meet their basic needs, such as access to clean water and sanitation, while emergency teams work tirelessly to locate survivors and provide life-saving aid," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.

Drinking water, hygiene, food, shelter and medicine are the most critical needs following extensive damage to buildings, roads and bridges, said Marcoluigi Corsi, acting humanitarian and resident coordinator of the UN following a two-day visit.

"Having lived through the terror of the earthquake, people now fear aftershocks and are sleeping outside on roads or in open fields," a worker from the International Committee of the Red Cross in Mandalay said in a report.

"We remain, of course, deeply committed to reaching people in Myanmar who need aid," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said. "And we must act swiftly to provide relief before the upcoming monsoon season, which, of course, will even worsen this horrendous crisis."

Huge impact

Scientists emphasized the seismic event's significant force and the factors contributing to its impact.

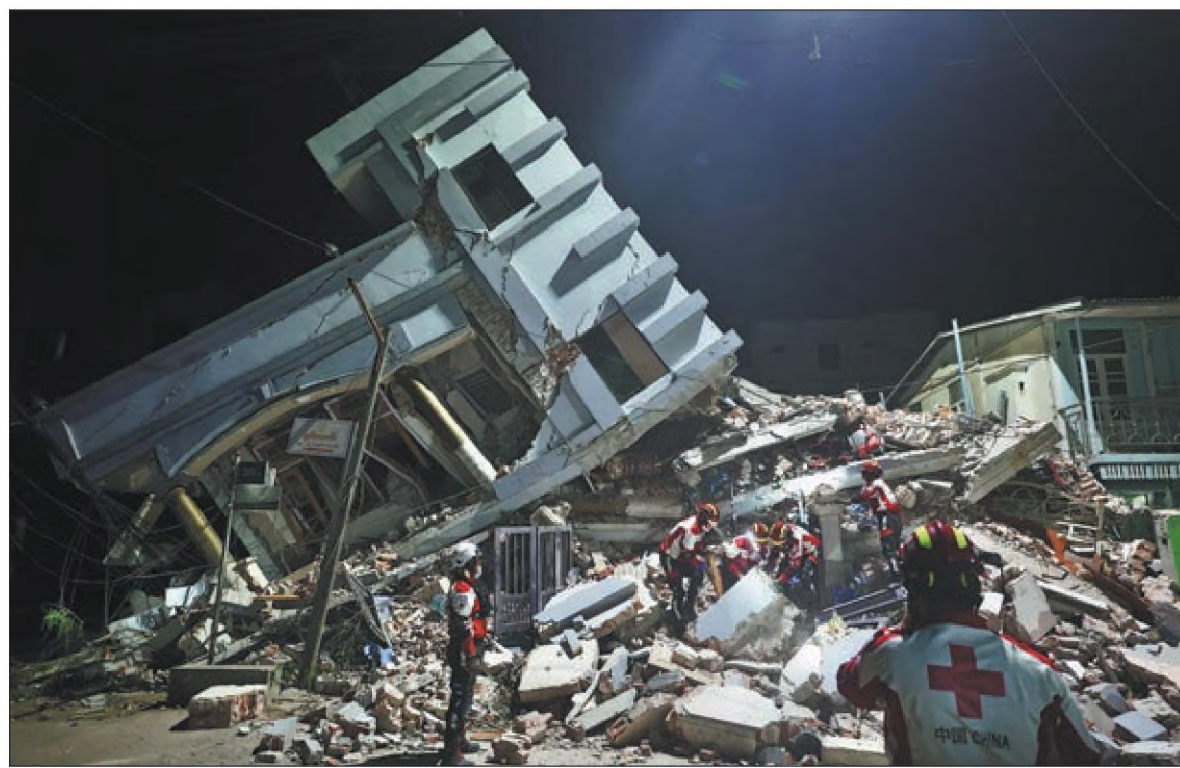
US geologist Jess Phoenix described the earthquake's energy release as equivalent to 334 atomic bombs, warning that aftershocks will continue to pose a significant threat for months.

She highlighted the ongoing collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates as a continuing source of seismic activity.

The Science Media Centre in the United Kingdom has compiled expert commentary, revealing a consensus on the earthquake's destructive potential.

Ian Watkinson, scholar from Royal Holloway, University of London, echoed these concerns, noting the earthquake's likely propagation along the Sagaing Fault, potentially up to 200 kilometers.

He highlighted the vulnerability



Top: Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team carried out searching and rescue work in Mandalay, Myanmar, on Monday. Above from left: A monk passes by a destroyed temple in Mandalay, Myanmar, on Tuesday. Residents line up at a shelter for disaster victims in Mandalay, Myanmar, on Monday. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

of Mandalay and other regional cities, which have experienced rapid high-rise concrete construction, often on the floodplains of the Irrawaddy River.

Giving aid

Rescue workers, sniffer dogs, paramedics and millions of dollars in aid have begun arriving in Myanmar after a massive earthquake ravaged much of the country.

China has announced \$14 million in assistance for Myanmar, including 1,200 tents, 8,000 blankets and 40,000 first aid kits.

Chinese teams that arrived 18 hours after the quake and more than 400 Chinese personnel are now on the ground in the region.

China also has multiple teams in Thailand, according to Xinhua News Agency.

According to the China International Development Cooperation Agency, the initial supplies included tents, blankets and first aid kits.

The United States pledged \$2 million in aid "through Myanmar-based humanitarian assistance organizations".

It said in a statement that an emergency response team from USAID, which is undergoing massive cuts under the US administration, is being sent to Myanmar.

Two Russian aircraft carrying 60 rescue workers, four dogs, ambulances and rescue vehicles arrived

in Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw on Sunday, Myanmar's state broadcaster MRTV reported.

The Japanese government has dispatched a five-person assessment party that includes medical professionals to lay the groundwork for a larger emergency rescue team.

India sent a search and rescue team, medical professionals and a military transport aircraft filled with blankets, hygiene kits, food packets and other essential items on Saturday.

Vietnam has sent a team of more than 100 rescuers, medical staff and firefighters along with aid and sniffer dogs.

Thailand, which was also hit by

the quake, has sent 55 air force personnel, including medics and search and rescue specialists, as well as medical supplies to Myanmar.

Indonesia's military said in a statement on Monday that it was sending emergency teams, including search and rescue workers, to Myanmar, as well as tents, food and logistical supplies.

Singapore has sent an 80-member team to assist with disaster rescue efforts. The government contributed about \$112,000 as seed money to support the fundraising efforts of the Singapore Red Cross.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

China and Cambodia's 'cold chain' shipping route boosts bilateral trade

The newly-launched "cold chain + general cargo" transport route between China's southernmost port Fangchenggang and Cambodia's Koh Kong Port is set to enhance Cambodia's export capacity, according to business insiders.

Lor Vichet, vice-president of the Cambodia Chinese Commerce Association told The Phnom Penh Post on March 18 that the new cold chain system will be especially beneficial for the agricultural sector, as it ensures goods are shipped at controlled temperatures.

"This preserves their quality. In addition, direct shipping from Fangchenggang to Koh Kong will provide many other benefits, such as reduced shipping times, no need for transshipment and lower costs," he said.

He noted that this was particularly relevant as Cambodia's agricultural yields continue to grow annually.

The new route was announced on March 15. The following day, Wang Wenbin, Chinese ambassador to Cambodia, took to social media to laud the latest commercial link between the two nations.

"Congrats to the maiden voyage of the 'cold chain + general cargo' route from Fangchenggang Port in Southwest China to Koh Kong Port, Cambodia. This 7-day direct line can cut shipping time by more than 50 percent, and logistical costs by over 20 percent, compared with the transit mode," he wrote.

Vichet noted that the new route demonstrates the strengthening of diplomatic and trade relations between Cambodia and China, especially in terms of the export of agricultural products to China.

\$2.662 billion

bilateral trade volume between China and Cambodia has been reached in the first two months of this year, showing a 21.1 percent year-on-year increase, according to the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia.

"This will help Cambodian agricultural products gain a greater presence in the Chinese market. Besides preserving product quality for longer periods and reducing transport times, it will also help lower production costs, making Cambodia's products more competitive in international markets," he said.

He also pointed out that if Cambodia's pharmaceutical production continues to grow and exports increase, then the demand for cold chain transport will also rise.

Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries reported that in 2024, the country exported 11.7 million tonnes of agricultural products, a 39 percent increase over 2023. Revenue from these goods was approximately \$4.8 billion.

Lim Heng, vice-president of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, explained that the annual growth of the Cambodia's agricultural production has created opportunities to increase its exports, especially with the ongoing implementation of free trade agreements with China as well as the RCEP agreement.

"I have noticed that our agricultural products are now being produced to meet export market demands such as rice, corn, mangoes and bananas, all of which are of increasingly better quality," he said.

The General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE) of Cambodia reported that in the first two months of the year, the country's total international trade value was \$9.447 billion. China remains Cambodia's largest trading partner, accounting for 28.18 percent of total trade.

GDCE said trade between the two countries reached a total of \$2.662 billion in the first two months of this year, a 21.1 percent increase over the same period last year.

THE PHNOM PENH POST

New airport in Nepal's 'tourism capital' sees first passenger flight from China

The new international airport in Pokhara, Nepal, has a scheduled passenger flight — with at least one weekly trip.

On Monday, Nepal-Xizang joint venture Himalaya Airlines flight took off from Lhasa Gonggar International Airport and landed at Pokhara International Airport at 1:56 pm local time.

There were 107 passengers, including 32 Chinese and 75 Nepalis. The flying time is around 90 minutes.

It was the first scheduled passenger flight landing at Pokhara since the airport's inauguration in 2023.

Prem Nath Thakur, the general manager of Pokhara Airport, expressed optimism about future flights, stating that this is just the beginning.

According to him, to promote the new facility and attract airlines, the airport has offered waivers for landing, parking, and ground handling fees for two years. Additionally, it has waived the passenger service charge of 3,000 Nepalese rupee (\$22) per tourist on departing flight.

Vijay Shrestha, spokesperson for Himalaya Airlines, said they have started with a weekly flight and will increase frequency based on demand.

Shrestha suggested that the government should promote Pokhara airport from a tourism perspective by categorizing the airport as strategically important, as many other countries do.

He also recommended promoting Bhairahawa Airport, another international airport in the southern Terai plains, as a budget airport to attract airlines. Bhairahawa Airport is another airport constructed in Nepal with the help of a Chinese contractor.

According to Shrestha, Himalaya Airlines aims to operate flights to 10 different tourist destinations in China from both Pokhara and Kathmandu, with a mission to bring a million Chinese tourists a year to Nepal.

Tourism entrepreneurs in Pokhara have initiated efforts to promote and market the new airport. Recently, the Pokhara Tourism Council, an umbrella organization of tourism

entrepreneurs, collaborated with China's Sichuan Airlines to launch charter flights between Chengdu, China, and Pokhara, Nepal.

Baburam Pandey, acting president of the Pokhara Tourism Council, said that Chengdu-based Sichuan Airlines has committed to operating flights for 10 weeks, aiming to bring 1,250 Chinese tourists to Pokhara, with one flight arriving each week.

Pokhara's dream

Pokhara International Airport, funded by Beijing, was inaugurated on January 1, 2023. The expectation was that Pokhara, as Nepal's tourism capital, would no longer depend on Kathmandu for tourist inflow and would directly attract visitors.

Pokhara, which serves as the gateway to the world-famous Annapurna Circuit trekking route, has seen significant investments in the hospitality industry after the construction of the new airport.

Shrestha of Himalaya Airlines stated that the launch of the Lhasa flight aligns with efforts to make Pokhara Visit Year 2025 a success,



The first passenger flight from Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region in China, landed at the Pokhara International Airport in Nepal and received a water cannon salute on Monday. CUI NAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

intending to welcome two million tourists, including Nepalis.

China has announced a "Visit Nepal 2025" campaign to support Nepal's tourism industry.

"Today, the Pokhara people's dream of direct scheduled international flights has come true! The first ever direct scheduled international flight from Lhasa landed at Pokhara International Airport by

Himalaya Airlines," Chinese ambassador to Nepal Chen Song wrote on X.

"A milestone not only for Nepali and Pokhara people but also for the connectivity and friendship between China and Nepal, celebrating the 70 years of diplomatic ties between our two countries."

THE KATHMANDU POST, NEPAL

WORLD



A container ship approaches the port of Santos in Brazil on Tuesday. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva swiped at the US decision to raise tariffs last week, saying the move will harm the US and global economies. ANDRE PENNER / AP

New tariffs target China, many nations

By YIFAN XU in Washington
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US President Donald Trump unveiled a new tariff policy on Wednesday afternoon to impose new tariffs on nearly all US trading partners, including a 34 percent levy on China.

Trump, speaking from the White House Rose Garden, announced an "economic emergency," introducing a 10 percent "baseline" tariff on imported goods and additional punitive tariffs targeting around 60 countries with what he called "unfair trade practices".

Trump said the tariff on all countries, except Canada and Mexico, will take effect on Saturday. He also announced that there would be "individualized" tariffs for countries that have the largest trade deficits with the United States, which would go into effect on April 9.

"For decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike," Trump said, adding that the tariffs were designed to boost domestic manufacturing.

Trump displayed a chart detailing various US trading partners, highlighting what he claimed were the tariffs those countries imposed on the United States. He then proposed that the US would apply reciprocal tariffs at half the rate charged by each nation, including China's alleged 67 percent effective tariff rate when factoring in "currency manipulation and trade barriers".

China was on the top of the chart, followed by the European Union.

"[On China], we're going to be charging a discounted reciprocal tariff of 34 percent," said Trump. Before today's announcement, Trump had already imposed 10 percent tariffs on Chinese goods in two separate rounds, one in February and another in March.

Later, White House documents detailed specific rates: China faces a 54 percent total tariff, with a new 34 percent added to the existing 20 percent, as confirmed by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. Other rates include the EU at 20 percent, Vietnam at 46 percent, Japan at 24 percent, Korea at 25 percent, India at 26 percent, Cambodia at 49 percent.

Trump said that the tariffs would address years of "unfair" trade practices, saying other countries had been exploiting the US.

US stock markets quickly erased earlier gains following Trump's remarks. In after-hours trading, S&P 500 futures dropped by 1.5 percent.

Numerous US lawmakers criticized Trump's tariff hike. Senator Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, said that "many of my Republican colleagues in Congress have already expressed concerns about these tariffs". Kaine authored a resolution to block Trump's tariffs on Canadian imports, which passed the Senate on Wednesday.

"His [Trump's] half-baked trade war will only raise prices for consumers," said Senator Peter Welch, a Vermont Democrat.

Senator Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, said: "If these tariffs go into effect, it will be so harmful. And as price hikes always do, they will hurt those the most who can afford the least."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said the reciprocal tariffs announced by the US President will "fundamentally change the international trading system". He also said Canada would fight American tariffs with countermeasures, although his country and Mexico were not on the list of new tariffs. Trump described the exclusion as an effort to stop illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the United Nations (UN), told China Daily at Wednesday's noon briefing that the UN has "expressed concern about what we've seen", which is "a rise in economic protectionism" and is concerned "about the impact it could have on the global economy".

Dujarric told the news conference at UN headquarters last week that the UN consistently encourages member states to settle trade disputes through constructive dialogue or established mechanisms.

"I think we've spoken about the issue of tariffs and our position remains the same. We live in a very much global interlinked economy. It is important that member states resolve their trade issues through constructive engagement or through existing architecture, whether it's within the UN or not."

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said on Tuesday that Europe has a plan to retaliate if Trump imposes widespread tariffs. "Europe did not start this confrontation," she said.

"There's only one conclusion: Trump is convinced that he's smarter than the many economists and business leaders who have urged him not to raise tariffs and risk a trade war," Anthony Moretti, an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, told China Daily.

"A trade war would harm Americans and people from all over the world, and it will damage bilateral relations," he said.

Trump signed another executive order effective May 2 to remove tariff exemptions for Chinese imports valued at \$800 or less and intends to apply the same measure to other countries once the federal government confirms it has the necessary staffing and resources in place. The "de minimis" exemption was helpful to popular e-commerce websites Temu and Shein.

Moretti said that Trump "slammed" China twice on Wednesday. "The 34 percent tariffs will likely draw the bigger headlines, and any response from China will only magnify what he said. But the president also eliminated the 'de minimis' rule that eliminated tariffs on imported items of less than \$800," he said. "In effect, what the president has decided is that everything entering the US from China must include a tariff."

"And that means higher prices whether the item is inexpensive or costly. Poorer Americans will especially feel the pain of higher prices because they have fewer dollars to spend," Moretti added.

Minlu Zhang in New York contributed to this story.

Countries gear up to build strategies amid tariff tensions

BRUSSELS — With his small steel mill facing hefty US tariffs, Canadian businessman Chris Wyatt is hunting for new European customers at the world's biggest industrial technology fair in Germany.

"There's uncertainty in the markets, so big projects are being shelved or they're just not moving ahead," said sales director Wyatt, handing out flyers at his stand, alongside big players in robotics and factory machinery.

This week's Hannover Messe, a fair that has attracted more than 4,000 exhibitors from around 60 countries, takes place as US President Donald Trump gears up to announce a wave of "reciprocal tariffs", ratcheting up global trade tensions even further.

This year's guest of honor is Canada, a clear signal that Europe stands with Ottawa as it faces hefty duties from the United States, its largest trading partner.

"Welcome to Germany, dear Canadian friends," German outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Sunday ahead of the fair's opening. "We stand by your side."

His comments highlighted warming ties between Europe and Canada amid the trade tensions with the US.

Trading partners from the European Union to Canada and Mexico have vowed to respond with retaliatory tariffs and other countermeasures, even as some have sought to negotiate with the White House.

A top EU official warned the US on Tuesday that the world's biggest trade bloc "holds a lot of cards" when it comes to dealing with the new tar-



A 'Proudly Canadian' sign is seen on the window of a bookshop in Windsor, Ontario, on Tuesday. JEFF KOWALSKY / AFP

iffs and has a good plan to retaliate if forced to.

"Europe has not started this confrontation. We do not necessarily want to retaliate, but if it is necessary, we have a strong plan to retaliate and we will use it," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told EU lawmakers.

The commission, the EU's executive branch, negotiates trade deals on behalf of the bloc's 27 member countries and manages trade disputes on their behalf.

"Europe holds a lot of cards, from trade to technology to the size of our market. But this strength is also built on our readiness to take firm countermeasures if necessary. All instruments are on the table," von der Leyen said at a European Parliament

session in Strasbourg, France.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum spoke on Tuesday about Canada's plan to "fight unjustified trade actions" by the US, Carney's office said.

'Buy Canadian'

US companies say a "Buy Canadian" movement is already making it harder for their products to reach that country's shelves.

The Brazilian government on Tuesday welcomed its Senate's push to advance the Reciprocity Bill, which would authorize tariff countermeasures against the United States, but emphasized that its preferred path remains dialogue and economic cooperation.

Speaking to reporters, Brazilian Vice-President Geraldo Alckmin applauded the Senate's effort to provide a legal framework for trade defense.

"Brazil wants to grow its commerce through reciprocity grounded in competitiveness," he said.

"But I must stress that the way forward is dialogue and economic complementarity. We could even expand into new partnerships," said the vice-president.

The Brazilian Senate's Economic Affairs Committee approved the bill earlier on Tuesday with 16 votes in favor and none against. The legislation would allow Brazil to apply reciprocal tariffs and environmental standards in response to foreign trade restrictions.

In response to additional US tariffs on automobiles, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba pledged on Tuesday to provide financing and procurement support to domestic companies.

During a news conference, Ishiba said if the US implements a 25 percent tariff on car imports, the government will set up designated consultation offices in about 1,000 locations across Japan to meet the funding needs of affected companies.

"Japan is the largest investor in the US," Ishiba said, noting his government will continue urging the US to exempt export-reliant Japan from additional tariffs on automobiles and other products.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Survey finds Europeans support countermeasures

By JONATHAN POWELL
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A survey shows most people in western Europe would back retaliatory tariffs against the United States if President Donald Trump implements sweeping import duties on major trading partners.

Trump was poised to announce a range of country-specific tariffs on Wednesday, a day he has called "liberation day". He has also indicated that he will introduce a 25 percent levy on car imports the next day.

The impact on European companies is expected to be severe, particularly on German automakers and French producers of luxury

goods, wine, Champagne, and spirits who get up to 20 percent of their revenue from US exports, reported The Guardian newspaper.

The European Union has pledged to respond with "timely, robust and calibrated" measures, with analysts warning the US move could dampen production, increase consumer costs, and lead to a trade war.

A YouGov poll released on Tuesday shows strong support across major European nations for retaliatory levies on US imports. Among the seven countries surveyed, support ranges from 79 percent in Denmark to 56 percent in Italy, with France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom also participating.

Support for retaliation reached 68 percent in both Germany, where luxury automakers Porsche, BMW, and Mercedes face major profit risks, and France, where annual US sales of wines and spirits total nearly 4 billion euros (\$4.3 billion).

The EU's top official issued a stern warning to Washington on Tuesday over Trump's tariffs and emphasized the bloc's economic leverage, reported The Associated Press.

The YouGov poll, which was conducted in mid-March, found backing for countermeasures remained strong across all seven nations despite widespread concerns about economic damage.

In Germany, where concerns

were highest, 75 percent said they expected "a lot" or "a fair amount" of impact on their economy.

Similar levels of concern were expressed in other major economies, with more than 60 percent of respondents in Spain, France, Italy, and Sweden saying they expect significant economic fallout.

Trump, who campaigned on reviving US industry, has frequently accused the EU of being "very unfair to us" on trade. In February, he claimed the 27-nation bloc was "formed to screw the United States".

A majority of respondents across the EU nations surveyed disagreed with Trump's assessment, with opposition strongest in Denmark and Germany.

Russian official heads to Washington for talks: Source

WASHINGTON — A senior Russian official is expected to visit Washington this week for talks with the Donald Trump administration, according to a source familiar with the plan.

Kirill Dmitriev, the chief of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, who was appointed last month as Kremlin's special envoy on international economic and investment cooperation, will meet with US special envoy Steve Witkoff, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Their meeting was reported earlier by CNN, which said Dmitriev and

Witkoff will hold talks on strengthening relations between the two countries as they seek to end the conflict in Ukraine.

The White House and the US Department of State did not immediately offer a comment. The Russian embassy in Washington and the Russian Direct Investment Fund did not respond to a request for comment outside business hours.

Dmitriev's trip will be the first time a senior Russian official has visited Washington for talks since Russia launched the special military operation in Ukraine in 2022.

The visit follows recent telephone calls between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin and comes as the US president seeks to meet with his Russian counterpart soon.

'Complex issue'

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday that Russia and the US are continuing talks to resolve the Ukraine conflict, calling it a "complex issue".

"We are continuing to maintain contact with the United States," Peskov said at a daily briefing, commenting on reported threats from the US

to impose additional sanctions on Russia's oil industry if ongoing peace talks fail to make substantive progress.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said in an interview that Russia could not simply accept the US-backed proposal on Ukraine, as it fails to address Russia's demands for resolving the root causes of the conflict.

Meanwhile in Europe, a UK government spokesperson said the country plans to follow up on recent high-level, multination meetings on the Russia-Ukraine conflict with addi-

tional gatherings in the coming days.

The official said the meetings will involve senior military figures from the UK, France and Ukraine. They will focus on fleshing out the concept of the "coalition of the willing" that London and Paris have said should be formed to provide peacekeeping or "reassurance" services if a peace deal is reached between Russia and Ukraine.

Keith Bennett, a London-based senior international relations analyst, told China Daily the gatherings organized recently by London and Paris seem to have made few breakthroughs.

"They're really drawing attention to the fact that they haven't made any progress with their plans

because it's all talk and no implementation," he said.

Bennett noted that the meeting in Paris involved around 30 countries but that "the essential dialogue is between Britain and France".

He said the situation has turned complicated as the UK and France seem to differ on the role of the "coalition of the willing", with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer seeing it as a peacekeeping force while President Emmanuel Macron of France is seemingly open to the idea of possibly engaging militarily with Russia.

Zheng Wanyin in London contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

BUSINESS

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PRIVATE ECONOMY

Sharing of credit info set to be enhanced

By TAN GUOLING
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China will improve its social credit system to address financing difficulties and high costs for private enterprises through improved sharing of credit information, officials said on Wednesday.

"The National Development and Reform Commission is helping to address information asymmetry between financial institutions and enterprises by providing more comprehensive and multidimensional data support to lenders," Li Chunlin, deputy head of the NDRC, said at a news conference in Beijing.

The NDRC will enhance the coverage, accessibility, and efficiency of loan services for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthen the sharing of government-held business credit information while ensuring data security, Li said.

The move comes after China's central leadership — at a symposium on private enterprises in February — called for addressing the financing difficulties and high costs faced by private enterprises, as the private sector plays a vital role in the nation's economic development.

A national integrated financing credit service platform network has been established, which has achieved institutionalized collection and sharing of 74 key categories of enterprise-related credit information at the national level, including business registration, tax payment, social security and housing provident fund data. This system facilitates authorized access for financial institutions to check and utilize relevant information, according to NDRC.

Banking institutions have disbursed loans totaling 37.3 trillion

yuan (\$5.13 trillion) through the national integrated financing credit service platform as of the end of February, including 9.4 trillion yuan in credit loans, effectively serving the financing needs of micro, small and medium-sized private businesses, Li added.

Looking forward, Li said that more efforts will be made to advance the financing credit service platform network, enhancing the quality and efficiency of information sharing, optimizing the platform's service functions and strengthening data application and product development.

The quality of data collection and sharing will be systematically upgraded to guarantee the accuracy of shared information, completeness of data and timeliness of updates, while continuously expanding the scope, he said.

"We will enhance the platform's comprehensive financial service capabilities, providing enterprises with a wider range of financial products while offering credit reports and risk assessments to financial institutions, so as to facilitate online processing for market entities," Li added.

"The National Financial Regulatory Administration will intensify efforts to boost information sharing and guide financial institutions in targeted collaboration, maintaining robust lending to small and micro enterprises while improving loan quality," said Jiang Ping, an NFRA official.

The administration will help to optimize loan portfolio structures and strengthen support for first-time loans, loan renewals and credit loan facilities, aiming to better fulfill the financing needs of credit-worthy small businesses, Jiang said.

Briefly

Efforts enhanced to boost green recycling

The State Grid has intensified its low-carbon approach for boosting the circular economy. In Jiangsu province, the local power system retired over 11,000 metric tons of cables, over 9,000 tons of aluminum stranded wires, and over 7,000 tons of insulated wires in 2024. Targeting the steady increase of these waste cables, the State Grid Xuzhou Power Supply Co established a resource recycling center in September 2024 to carry out green dismantling of cables, which faced difficulties to dismantle due to a lack of professional capabilities. So far, it has

finished the centralized disposal of multiple batches of waste cables, yielding 670 tons of recyclable and reusable materials.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 18 pips to 7.1793 against the US dollar on Wednesday, 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.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



The China Pavilion under preparation for the upcoming World Expo 2025, to be held from April 13 to Oct 13 in Osaka, Japan. JIA HAOCHENG / XINHUA

World Expo to bolster trade ties with Japan

China Pavilion expected to be a major platform to boost bilateral exchanges

By ZHU WENQIAN
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China and Japan will jointly develop World Expo 2025 into a platform for exchanges and friendship between the two peoples, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said on Wednesday.

World Expo 2025, to be held from April 13 to Oct 13 in Osaka, Japan's third-largest city, has seen all preparatory work basically completed. The China Pavilion, themed "Building a Community of Life for Man and Nature — Future Society of Green Development", will officially open on April 13, the Beijing-based council said.

As tensions rise over impending tariff threats from the United States and growing uncertainties in the external environment, China, Japan and South Korea are expected to form closer ties to maintain Asia's economic stability and create a buffer against unilateralism.

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

Meanwhile, during the sixth China-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue held in Tokyo in late March — the first such dialogue between the two countries in about six years — China clearly stated that it will support Japan in hosting World Expo 2025 and the expo should be built into a platform for exchanges and friendship between the people of the two countries.

China and Japan are jointly committed to building a constructive and stable economic and trade relationship that meets the needs of the new era, and the two sides reached such a consensus during the dialogue amid uncertainty brought about by trade protectionism.

Covering an area of approximately 3,500 square meters, the China Pavilion stands as one of the largest foreign pavilions at this year's World Expo.

"We have actively implemented the important consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries and fully integrated elements of Sino-Japanese friendship into the design of the China Pavilion," said Li Qingshuang, deputy head of the CCPIT and government representative of the China Pavilion.

"The China Pavilion will become an important platform for China

and Japan to strengthen local exchanges and deepen practical cooperation in various sectors, allowing more people from both countries to get closer and making Sino-Japanese relations more heartwarming," Li said.

At the pavilion, a set of wooden carvings depicting representative figures, classic scenes and touching moments in the over 2,000 years of history of friendly exchanges between China and Japan indicate that people from all walks of life from the two countries can draw wisdom from the history, tap into common cultural values and continue to seek common ground, the CCPIT said.

During the expo, Chinese provincial and municipal delegations, enterprises, institutions, media and think tanks will engage in various forms of cultural, tourism and economic exchanges and interactions with the Japanese side. More than 60 pairs of friendly cities are expected to take part in World Expo 2025 as an opportunity to continue deepening their mutual-beneficial cooperation, the CCPIT said.

The China Pavilion highlights the Chinese philosophy that humans must respect nature, follow its way and live in harmony with nature. The exterior design of the pavilion is inspired by bamboo slips and shaped like an unfolded Chinese traditional calligraphy scroll.

New price setting mechanism on cards

By OUYANG SHIJIA
and WANG KEJU

China is set to optimize the price governance mechanism, with the primary aim of empowering market forces to play a more decisive role in price formation, while promoting efficient allocation of resources to serve the construction of a unified national market, said officials and experts.

The initiative is a critical component of China's broader efforts to create a fair, open and perfectly competitive market climate that will help unleash greater vitality for businesses of all types and strengthen the growth momentum of the economy, they added.

According to a document issued on Wednesday by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, the country plans to expedite the establishment of a high-level price governance mechanism that is market-effective, well-regulated and scientifically managed.

"The price mechanism is a crucial component of a market economy. Market-determined pricing is a fundamental requirement for economic operations and the primary means of resource allocation," said Guo Liyan, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research's Economic Research Institute.

So far, 97.5 percent of society's goods and services prices have been decided by the market, data from the National Development and Reform Commission showed, underscoring the decisive role of the market in resource allocation.

"It plays a key role in regulating supply and demand, improving resource allocation efficiency, accelerating the formation of new quality productive forces, and promoting green and low-carbon development," Guo said.

The document emphasizes the need to consider overall supply-demand dynamics, economic growth, and market expectations when setting reasonable price level targets, thereby strengthening macroeconomic policy guidance.

Guo said she believes this approach helps align price policies with fiscal, monetary, industrial, employment, investment, and consumption policies, enhancing macro-policy coordination and governance.

Over the short term, Guo stressed that "price regulation efforts should be well-calibrated and effective, focusing on fine-tuning expectations, implementing range-based and targeted controls, and stabilizing key commodity and service prices to support economic recovery".

Maintaining a stable price level is one of the key objectives of China's macroeconomic regulation. By enhancing the price mechanism, the country aims to better guide price dynamics in a way that supports overall macroeconomic stability and high-quality growth, said an NDRC official.

Over the past decade, China's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, has grown at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent, data from the NDRC show.

"That reflects overall stability," said Deng Yusong, director of the Institute for Market Economy at the Development Research Center of the State Council.

"Robust agricultural and industrial supply capabilities have served as stabilizing forces for price levels. As demand structures evolve, particularly with the continued expansion of the services sector, favorable conditions for price stability are expected to increase, providing a favorable environment for further pricing reforms," Deng said.

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Chinese self-driving firms playing key role on global stage

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese self-driving auto companies are intensifying efforts to make forays into overseas markets as part of a broader drive to bolster the large-scale commercial application of autonomous driving technology and enhance the competitiveness of domestic enterprises on the global intelligent automotive landscape.

Chinese tech heavyweight Baidu Inc recently announced that its autonomous ride-hailing platform Apollo Go has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Roads and Transport Authority of Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, to launch autonomous driving testing and services in the city.

As part of the agreement, Apollo Go will deploy 100 fully autonomous vehicles in Dubai by the end of 2025, using its sixth-generation robotaxi, with plans to expand the fleet to no fewer than 1,000 by 2028. The move marks Apollo Go's first international fleet deployment outside the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong and its first entry into the Middle East.

The company said all tests and services will be conducted in line with Dubai's local laws and adapted to regional needs. The collaboration aims to integrate autonomous ride-hailing into Dubai's broader trans-

portation ecosystem, offering enhanced mobility services for residents and contributing to the city's intelligent infrastructure goals.

Apollo Go has also inked a strategic partnership with Autogo, a UAE-based autonomous mobility company, with the goal of deploying the largest fully driverless fleet in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE.

Initial trials of dozens of Apollo Go autonomous vehicles will be deployed in select areas of Abu Dhabi, with phased expansion planned ahead of full commercial operations by 2026. Looking ahead, Apollo Go and Autogo will work together to scale commercial operations of robotaxi services to serve more users and contribute to Abu Dhabi's smart city vision.

Chinese self-driving auto company Pony.ai is accelerating steps to expand its presence abroad. It has established an R&D center in Luxembourg, with a key focus on exploring and developing cutting-edge autonomous driving technology and offering customized solutions for the European market.

Pony.ai has set up a joint venture in South Korea in collaboration with a local tech company to promote the development and application of self-driving technology. The two sides plan to deploy an autonomous driving vehicle fleet in Seoul to provide



A robotaxi vehicle seen on a street in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ride-hailing services to the public.

The company also obtained an investment of \$100 million from NEOM, a smart city being built in northwestern Saudi Arabia, and the NEOM Investment Fund in 2023. Pony.ai and NEOM will develop, manufacture and deliver autonomous driving services, advanced vehicles and smart vehicle infrastructure in NEOM and key markets in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Zhang Xiang, visiting professor at the engineering department of

Huanghe Science and Technology University, said China is at the global forefront of research and development and the use of autonomous driving technology, emphasizing that the accelerated expansion of Chinese self-driving companies abroad will be conducive to propelling the large-scale commercialization of the cutting-edge technology globally.

He noted that authorities in some European countries and the Middle East hold a relatively open attitude toward autonomous driving tech-

nology and are promoting the testing and use of robotaxis.

More efforts should be made to comply with relevant laws and regulations in overseas markets, conduct more testing based on different road conditions, learn about the usage habits of consumers, as well as strengthen data management and compliance and personal privacy protection, Zhang added.

According to a report from research company MarketsandMarkets, the scale of the global robotaxi market is projected to reach \$45.7 billion by 2030, at a compound annual growth rate of 91.8 percent from 2023 to 2030.

The growth of the robotaxi market is influenced by rising demand for ride-hailing services, high R&D investments and government focus on reducing emissions, infrastructure development and growth of the electrification of vehicles.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said Chinese self-driving enterprises have accumulated abundant testing and operational experience in the domestic market and are eager to play a bigger role in the global autonomous driving sector by leveraging their technical strengths, adding there is a strong demand for autonomous vehicles in overseas markets.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Plush toy appeal intensifies among youth

By WANG KEJU
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A normal-sized plush toy retails for around 50 yuan (\$6.9) on average in China. However, a 31-centimeter version plush toy from London-based toymaker Jellycat is priced at 399 yuan or more, and flies off the shelves the moment it becomes available.

These soft and cuddly toys have managed to transcend the traditional toy market, appealing to the emotional and psychological needs of young adults who are increasingly seeking comfort, companionship and a sense of self-expression through their purchases, analysts said.

Jellycat's products are defined by two key characteristics: instantly recognizable features like button eyes, tiny feet and endearing smiles, as well as whimsical, anthropomorphic designs that bring the plush toys to life.

Its social media accounts have a unique way of addressing their plush toys, referring to them as "furry friends" and "retired employees" when products are discontinued. The brand regularly shares the "daily lives" of their characters, even running "employee of the month" contests.

By cultivating an immersive brand world, the company has managed to forge strong emotional bonds with its consumers, who believe that their Jellycat friends possess genuine personalities and souls, said Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy.

For Weng Huayu, a sophomore student at Beijing Language and Culture University, the connection to her Jellycat plush orange she bought in 2023 goes far beyond a simple purchase. Weng, who goes by the online nickname "Big Orange", felt an instant kinship with the toy.

"I felt like there was a special bond between us," Weng said. "I started bringing it to class with me, and now I take it everywhere. I've really grown to love it."

In Weng's eyes, her Jellycat plush orange has a warm, easygoing personality. "It's a bit naughty as well — it often runs away when I try to take photos of it. It loves to play hide-and-seek and will hide in real orange piles. It also enjoys traveling, and we've been to many places together."

During her travels, Weng always makes sure to take plenty of photos of the plush toy with the scenic backdrops and posts those in her WeChat moments.

On social media platform Xiaohongshu — also known as RedNote — users like Weng who treat Jellycat plush toys as children are far from uncommon. Many consumers have embraced Jellycat products as lifestyle companions, taking them along to class, meals, work and while traveling.

Some have even gone so far as to create dedicated social media accounts for their Jellycat plush toys, chronicling the "daily lives" of these furry companions.

Zhu said that Jellycat's ability to

Many consumers embracing these soft and cuddly products as lifestyle companions, often taking them along to class, meals, work, and while traveling



Above: Consumers browse toys at a Jellycat counter in Shanghai on Jan 20.

Left: Shoppers take photographs with Jellycat products at a shopping mall in Shanghai on Dec 4.

WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Jellycat has enabled consumers to see these plush toys as more than just inanimate objects, but also as friends, companions, and even extensions of their own identity.”

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy

31.5 percent

year-on-year increase of Pop Mart's Chinese mainland revenue in the first half of 2024

imbue its products with distinct personalities and backstories has been instrumental in fostering these deep, almost anthropomorphic bonds between consumers and the plush toys.

"By creating a sense of individuality and lifelike features around their products, Jellycat has enabled consumers to see these plush toys as more than just inanimate objects, but also as friends, companions, and even extensions of their own identity," Zhu added.

This user-generated content has become a powerful marketing tool. Each post, photo or video is not

just an advertisement — it's a personal story that resonates with others. These stories, amplified by social media algorithms, create a ripple effect, inspiring others to buy into the same emotional experience, Zhu said.

As of Feb 21, a search for "Jellycat" on Xiaohongshu yielded over 1.69 million posts. Moreover, during last year's "Double 11" online shopping spree, which took place from Oct 31 to Nov 11, Jellycat's store on Alibaba's e-commerce platform Tmall saw sales exceed 100 million yuan.

In addition to e-commerce platforms like JD.com, Tmall, and Xiao-

hongshu, Jellycat — unlike many global brands — has no self-operated brick-and-mortar stores in China. Instead, it relies on third-party retailers, including maternal stores, bookstores and coffee shops, often operated by well-known chain brands.

"Authorized dealers are finding it quite challenging to maintain adequate inventory, often having to scramble to secure the latest Jellycat releases and popular items," said Chen Yingjie, owner of a bookstore in Shanghai. "My store needs to restock Jellycat merchandise every one to two weeks."

Debut economy critical tool to enhance competitive edge

By WANG KEJU

From the first restaurant that required customers to pedal bicycles to generate electricity, to the first cup of bubble tea delivered by drones — and the first exhibition viewed through virtual reality headsets — China's "debut economy" is pushing the boundaries of the consumer experience, analysts said.

The thirst for novelty and the desire to be the first to try the latest have become powerful drivers of consumption, particularly among the younger generation.

Brands that can tap into this sentiment and deliver a true sense of excitement and exclusivity will reap significant rewards, they added.

The debut economy is a new concept put forward during the country's tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference in December. It is a catchall phrase to describe companies launching new products, introducing new business models, services and technologies, and opening flagship stores.

The debut economy has become a critical tool for cities across China to enhance their competitive edge. As

early as 2018, Shanghai pioneered the concept of the first-store economy, which has since evolved into the broader debut economy, said Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy.

In the first 11 months of 2024, Shanghai added 1,173 new first-to-market stores. Not to be outdone, Beijing saw over 900 first-store openings throughout last year, while Guangzhou in Guangdong province welcomed 260 first-store openings in the first three quarters.

High above the streets of Hangzhou's Yuhang district in Zhejiang province, a hum fills the air as a drone descends, carrying a hot cup of bubble tea. The drone deftly delivered the bubble tea made 20 kilometers away to an automated pickup locker in Xiaogucheng Village in just over 20 minutes.

"I was craving bubble tea this afternoon and heard about the drone delivery service here," Sun Changshun, a 31-year-old resident, said. "I placed the order on the platform, and before I knew it, the tea had arrived right at my doorstep, with a delivery fee of only 8 yuan. It was a

“Each year, we feel the evolving consumption demands of Chinese consumers, which translates into our product innovations.”

Victor Leal Negre, senior vice-president of Greater China Grooming at Procter & Gamble

truly novel experience."

The delivery route, stretching from Wanda Plaza to Xiaogucheng Village, is part of a new low-altitude logistics network launched by drone maker Antwork Technology in November, providing a glimpse into the future of last-mile delivery.

By being the first to offer such a unique and technologically advanced solution, the company is not only meeting consumer demand for convenience and speed, but also

tapping into the growing appetite for novel, cutting-edge experiences, said Liu Feng, operation manager of Antwork Technology.

At the seventh China International Import Expo in November in Shanghai, over 400 new products, technologies and services made their debut, emerging as a critical highlight of the event.

In China's rapidly evolving consumer market, marked by a constant stream of new products and technologies, the key to success is not just the sheer volume of offerings, but rather the level of personalization, sophistication and relevance that companies can bring to the table, said Victor Leal Negre, senior vice-president of Greater China Grooming at Procter & Gamble.

"Each year, we feel the evolving consumption demands of Chinese consumers, which translates into our product innovations, allowing us to serve consumers more effectively," Negre said.

In the fiercely competitive landscape of China's consumer market, capturing the attention of consumers has become a critical challenge



A customer shops at Holiland and Sexy Tea, a popular tea brand also known as Modern China Tea Shop, in Yichang, Hubei province on Dec 24. LI YALONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

for brands, said Dong Yu, executive vice-president of the China Institute for Development Planning at Tsinghua University.

With an abundance of choices and limited attention spans, companies are increasingly turning to new product or service launches to stand out, Dong said.

The launch of a first-to-market store, product or service doesn't just generate excitement and foot traffic on its own. It also has a ripple effect,

The competition to get hold of the most sought-after Jellycat toys is intense, both at the consumer and retailer levels. This dynamic has spawned a thriving secondary market, where resellers are able to mark up prices, sometimes even doubling from the original rates, to meet overwhelming demand from consumers, Chen said.

It remains unclear whether Jellycat's persistent supply shortages are a deliberate tactic or an unavoidable challenge, but one thing is certain: the brand's immense popularity and innovative product offerings have been established in the Chinese market, Chen said.

The growing acceptance of toy ownership in China is also seen in the latest financial results of Pop Mart, a leading Chinese trend toymaker. In its 2024 interim report, the company reported revenue of 3.21 billion yuan from the Chinese mainland, representing a 31.5 percent year-on-year increase.

Pop Mart has even expanded into the theme park business, opening its first in Beijing in 2023. Pop Land — a 40,000-square-meter theme park — offers a chance for fans to take pictures with the toymaker's flagship characters in different settings, ranging from a European-inspired white castle to a leafy tree house.

Pop Land tickets sell for 150 yuan during weekdays and 180 yuan during peak periods. A combo ticket is available at 299 yuan for those hoping to join an immersive experience with its flagship characters.

People are moving away from the outdated perception that toys are solely for children, and embracing the idea that people of all ages can find enjoyment, fulfillment and value in these products, said Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangao.

The success of brands like Jellycat and Pop Mart comes at a time when Chinese consumers have evolved beyond the traditional emphasis on the practical use of a product. They are now actively seeking out items that can provide them with a sense of emotional fulfillment, cultural connections and social signaling, Jiang said.

According to a report released by the China Consumers Association in May, in addition to seeking value for money, emotional release and fulfillment are set to become important factors in influencing the purchasing decisions of the younger generations of Chinese consumers.

Raising a child or pet requires a significant investment of resources that many young people simply cannot afford. Plush toys, on the other hand, offer a low-maintenance alternative that can provide a sense of emotional fulfillment without the same level of financial and time commitment, Jiang said.

As the influence of this new consumption mindset continues to grow, Jiang noted that the competition among brands will increasingly center around their ability to deliver products and experiences that can forge genuine, lasting emotional connections with their target audience.

attracting complementary businesses and driving increased consumer engagement in the surrounding area, Dong added.

That said, this attention does not automatically translate into lasting customer loyalty and engagement. Businesses and cities must adopt a more holistic, ecosystem-driven approach — one that goes beyond the single debut event and takes into account the entire product or service lifecycle, Dong said.

COMMENT

Editorials

Washington's overreaction to PLA drills serves as a telling sign of its duplicity

Despite Beijing unequivocally stating the military exercises it launched this week near the Taiwan island "are a serious warning and an act of containment against Taiwan independence separatist forces, and a legitimate and necessary move to defend national sovereignty and uphold national unity", some still wrongly insist they are a test of the United States' and its allies' resolve to "defend" Taiwan.

They try and justify their claim by citing the timing of the drills, which came after US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's first visit to the Asia-Pacific, during which he said the US would provide "credible deterrence" in the region, including in the Taiwan Strait.

But anyone with their finger on the pulse of cross-strait relations should have been expecting the exercises. It was inevitable that the central authorities would respond to the extremely provocative speech Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te gave last month, in which he referred to the island as "a sovereign democratic state", called the mainland a "hostile external force", and vowed a series of measures to purge mainland elements on the island.

Those espousing the view that the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command's joint exercises were intended to gauge the reaction of the US should also be reminded that the drills were specifically tailored to hone combat readiness and familiarize troops with battlefield conditions to enhance operational capabilities and demonstrate the PLA's ability to crush secessionist forces.

Although the central authorities do have to take into account external factors in the country's internal affairs — particularly in relation to the Taiwan question, which the US perceives as a strategic tool, to be exploited until its utility is exhausted — they have undoubtedly seized the initiative in the cross-strait situation and are advancing the reunification cause step by step as planned.

It is the Democratic Progressive Party authorities led by Lai that are trying to amplify the misleading view of the military drills. While vilifying their fellow compatriots as "enemies" for promoting exchanges and cooperation with the Chinese mainland, they are entrusting the island's destiny to the patronage of the US.

Lai's perception of the US as a partner, a patron, and a powerful backer of his secessionist cause is delusional. To believe that the US has any genuine concern for the interests of the island or its residents is just make-believe.

The historical truths cannot be distorted or denied. The fundamental fact that Taiwan is an integral part of China remains unalterable, regardless of the efforts by "Taiwan independence" elements and external anti-China forces to make it seem otherwise.

In a statement on Tuesday, Tammy Bruce, spokesperson for the US State Department, called the PLA's activities and rhetoric toward Taiwan "aggressive", "intimidation tactics" and "destabilizing behavior" that serve to "exacerbate tensions and put the region's security and the world's prosperity at risk", reiterating the US' "enduring commitment to our allies and partners, including Taiwan".

But although the US and some of its allies try and hype up the Taiwan question as an international issue in such a way, the one-China principle is set in stone via the binding diplomatic documents they have signed on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing.

As such, the US' overreaction to the PLA's joint drills near Taiwan is a telling sign of either its duplicity on the Taiwan question or it being a dog that is being wagged by its tail.

The fundamental status quo across the Taiwan Strait is that the two sides belong to one China. It is the DPP authorities that are trying to change the perception of that with the support of the US.

The more Lai and the DPP lean on the US for support, the more harm they inflict upon Taiwan. The future and prosperity of Taiwan hinge on fostering friendly cross-strait relations and pursuing peaceful national reunification.

Bullying tariffs will scar US too

The simplistic slogan "America First" has a long and storied, politically charged history in the United States. But its enduring appeal has found fertile ground amid the festering disillusionment with the American Dream, as wage stagnation, job insecurity and automation have eroded trust in traditional pathways to personal prosperity.

While the US leader's political ideology has been shaped by a variety of influences, including his own experiences in business and entertainment, the influence of figures such as the paleoconservative Pat Buchanan, who campaigned for the presidency on an "America First" platform at the turn of the century, cannot be discounted.

Buchanan's nationalist, protectionist, and anti-globalist views have strongly resonated with the US president, who has tipped his hat to their shaping of his own political agenda.

Timing is everything, of course. And the US leader rebranded Buchanan's message at a time when the US economy was reeling from the impact of a new wave of technology and the cost of the US' ignominious military adventurism.

And with the limitations of US military power projection evident, the US leader — whose political brand prioritizes economic nationalism as the salve for popular and personalized grievance at the country's perceived loss of status — has enthusiastically embraced the weaponization of tariffs as the means to "Make America Great Again", prioritizing national identity and sovereignty over the rules-based trade system the US was a primary architect of.

Thus the US president has, in his bombastic way, designated April 2 as "Liberation Day" — the day when "reciprocal tariffs" on countries that impose duties on US goods are introduced. But the aggressive move will not free the US from its reliance on foreign goods as he predicts. Rather, it will reinforce the cage the US has erected around its economy.

The reciprocal tariffs come after similar recent announcements of additional 25 percent taxes on auto imports, punitive levies against Chinese, Canadian and Mexican imports, and steep new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. As of the time of writing, it remains unclear how the latest tariff attack will be implemented. But economists have warned the tariffs could plunge the US into a recession because of inflationary pressures, declining consumer confidence and volatile stock markets.

While the US president lauds tariffs as a "beautiful" panacea for all the US' ills, their downsides, which he dismisses, are not negligible. The US leader has argued that his tariffs will raise money for the federal government, claiming "you're going to see billions of dollars, even trillions of dollars coming into our country very soon in the form of tariffs". But many economists have said his estimates are overblown and the tariffs are "a hidden tax on Americans".

And while the White House insists tariffs will help to revitalize domestic industries and bring back manufacturing, it remains to be seen how effective the tactic will be in exerting pressure on companies to move production to the US to avoid hefty tariffs on foreign imports. Not to mention whether the US is ready to accept the environmental toll that will have to be paid for large-scale, heavy manufacturing.

The indiscriminate use of tariffs also risks exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Many US companies have already reported lower profits as a result of weaker demand, slower deliveries and tariff-induced cost pressures. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index fell 1.3 points last month to 49, lower than expected and below the 50 mark that signals contraction. "Prices growth accelerated due to tariffs, causing new order placement backlogs, supplier delivery slowdowns and manufacturing inventory growth," said Timothy Fiore, chair of ISM's Manufacturing Business Survey Committee.

Some may argue that the US administration is just using tariffs as a transactional tool to maximize the US' interests in dealmaking. Yet the move will inflict long-term damage on global faith in the US as a responsible power, especially when the world sees how readily the US president runs roughshod over World Trade Organization rules and the trade agreements the US has signed with other countries.

China has repeatedly warned that there is no winner in a trade war. The Foreign Ministry has made clear that it will continue to take measures to firmly safeguard its legitimate rights and interests as necessary, while calling on the US administration to resolve the trade issues through equal consultations on the basis of mutual respect. At a time when the global economy is continuing to rapidly evolve, finding a balance between protecting domestic interests and engaging in international trade cooperation remains a paramount challenge for all countries.

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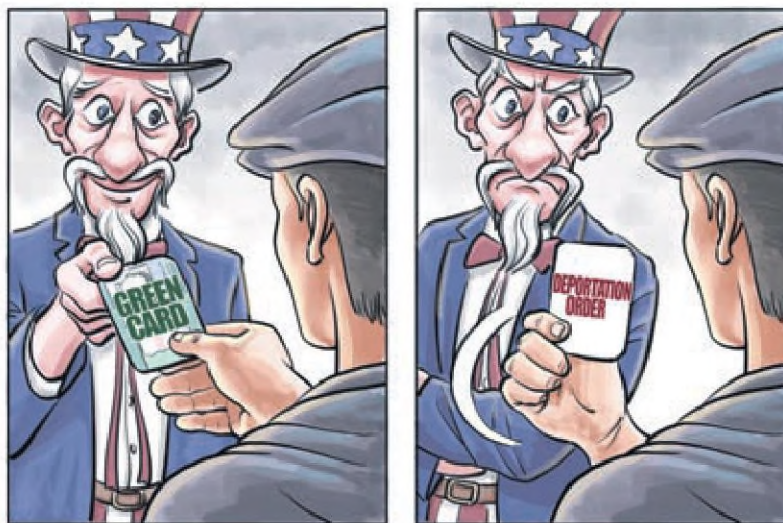
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Jin Ding



Opinion Line

'Dragon-elephant tango' gives dynamic boost to the region

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, China stands ready to work with India to advance the sound and stable development of bilateral relations.

That is the core idea Beijing has expressed in the congratulatory message it sent to New Delhi to mark the occasion on Tuesday. It is good to see India actively echoed that with Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi making similar proposals on India's part in their messages to Beijing on the same day.

It serves both countries' common interests, as well as those of the region, that China and India should find ways to unleash the potential of their win-win cooperation, and strengthen communication and coordination in major international affairs.

The overall development of China-India relations demonstrates that it is the right choice for China and India to be friendly neighbors. The remarkable progress the two sides have made in their efforts to resolve their border disputes through negotiations indicates they have the wisdom to settle their differences, as well as the shared willingness to not only repair their once strained relationship but also make it better than before.

Under the guidance of heads of state diplomacy, the two countries' special representatives on the boundary question held the first meeting of its kind in five years in Beijing in December, and reached a six-point consensus, agreeing to seek a solution to the boundary question that is fair, reasonable and acceptable to both in

accordance with the political guiding principles proposed in 2005.

Unlike previous border talks, these were followed up by a meeting of the two sides in January in Beijing that carried forward the positive momentum by extending it to people-to-people exchanges. The series of specific measures to that effect, including carrying out media and think tank exchanges, resuming direct flights between the Chinese mainland and India, and resuming the mutual dispatching of journalists between the two countries were unimaginable just two to three years ago after New Delhi decided to shut the door to exchanges.

Notably, their common understandings also include the resumption of Indian pilgrimages to the sacred mountain and lake in China's Xizang autonomous region this year, and the plan to formulate an expert-level mechanism on cross-border river cooperation. Two previously knotty issues that some external forces have tried to take advantage of to drive a wedge between the two countries. By engaging each other on these issues, the two neighbors have sent a clear signal that they are confident that their differences can be handled properly through consultations and communications under a bilateral framework.

It is clear both Beijing and New Delhi now adopt an open and constructive attitude to actively promote dialogue, exchanges and practical cooperation, guide public opinion and popular support in a positive direction, enhance trust and remove suspicion, properly handle differences, and promote China-India rela-

tions to move forward on a sound and stable track.

Through their candid and in-depth exchanges of views on issues of respective concern, the two neighbors can develop a rational perception on each other's development, and therefore consolidate mutual trust.

As the two largest developing countries, there is every reason for the two neighbors to support each other rather than undercut each other, and work with each other rather than guard against each other. This serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples.

As two ancient civilizations, they should have enough wisdom and capability to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas pending a fair and reasonable solution. They should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question, let specific differences affect the overall picture of bilateral ties or allow other countries to drive a wedge between them.

As important members of the Global South, China and India must not only safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of their own, they also have the responsibility to take the lead in opposing hegemonism and power politics, and to uphold the basic norms governing international relations.

When China and India join hands for a "dragon-elephant tango", the dynamism of bilateral ties will brighten the prospects of not only their own relations, but also regional common interests and greater democracy in international relations.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Propaganda no match to human connections

A smartphone without filter has defeated negative propaganda worth billions. According to a legislation, last year, the United States allocated \$1.6 billion under the "Countering PRC Malign Influence Fund" to shape global narratives on China by subsidizing pliable media and NGOs.

But the 37 million YouTube followers of US internet celebrity Darren Watkins Jr, known online as iShowSpeed, have eclipsed the reach of most of these US-funded outlets. His unscripted journey through China, filmed on a simple smartphone, has countered what \$1.6 billion in taxpayer money tried to do — paint China in a poor light.

A fatal flaw in the playbook of US politicians and media outlets is that they work on the premise that China must be portrayed as a problem, and then retrofit facts to justify their claim. The \$1.6 billion fund bankrolls entities that systematically amplify China's shortcomings.

When the United States Agency for International Development, a source of these funds, partners with entities such as AidData — a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute, which, in 2023, published a widely debunked hit piece on the Belt and Road Initiative — the outcome has to be polemics disguised as analysis. Most of these grantees extend

funds on the condition that recipients will portray Chinese infrastructure as "debt traps", Chinese tech as "spyware", and Chinese society as "oppressed" despite the reality being contrary to these claims.

However, this carefully crafted narrative has crumbled under the weight of simple lived experience. Each frame from iShowSpeed's streams — where flawless 5G connectivity is available even inside bullet trains running at 350 kilometers per hour, where retirees spontaneously include foreigners in their dance routines, and where cultural landmarks such as the Shaolin Temple welcome all visitors as equals — is an indictment of the US media complex's manufactured hysteria.

Many US viewers couldn't believe their eyes when they saw iShowSpeed use Alipay's QR codes to book a ride on the Shanghai subway, a system far more advanced than the magnetic-stripe cards they still use in New York. They had all along believed reports describing China as a poor country with outdated technology. Viewers conditioned to think Chinese people live in fear watched in disbelief as pedestrians grinned at the camera.

The propaganda has digressed too far away from the truth. Which explains why platforms like Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, have become

popular among US TikTok "refugees". Those on social networking sites in the US have also grown skeptical of entities that label China's mobile payment systems as "surveillance tools".

When a Shaolin monk accords to iShowSpeed the same patience that he does to local students, it obliterates the "xenophobic China" trope. When farmers livestream about their produce to urban buyers, it demolishes claims of "digital repression". No amount of USAID funding can help spin false narratives at a time when the US' own propaganda machine is sputtering: Voice of America's website is lying dormant since mid-March.

It is clear now that China's infrastructure speaks through its 150,000 kilometers of high-speed railway, which is more than the rest of the world combined, its cultural confidence beams through viral videos of cross-generational hip-hop battles in parks, while its global appeal grows thanks to the over hundreds of millions of outbound tourists annually who've become its cultural ambassadors. The \$1.6 billion question is whether Washington will increase the budget for demonizing China or acknowledge that no amount of taxpayers' money can compete with a simple truth: people trust peers more than pundits.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Irina Bokova

China's poverty eradication inspires world

I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the 2025 International Forum on Poverty Governance and Global Development for inviting me to the forum. It has given me the opportunity to visit the beautiful province of Yunnan that boasts stunning natural beauty and rich cultural diversity, with five UNESCO sites on the World Heritage List.

Whether it is the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2023, or the Three Parallel Rivers National Park in the mountainous northwest of Yunnan (the 1.7 million hectare site features sections of the upper reaches of three great rivers of Asia — the Yangtze, Mekong and Salween rivers that run roughly parallel north to south), the province continues to fascinate the world as the epicenter of China's biodiversity.

Poverty is a major problem that human society has been, and is still, facing in many parts of the world. It is not by chance that the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, put "No Poverty" as the first goal — "To end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030". This is fundamental, if we want to "leave no one behind", which is the underlying goal of the UN Agenda 2030.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, China has lifted about 800 million people out of poverty, accounting for more than 70 percent of global poverty reduction. What is remarkable about China's economic miracle is that the government has made human development the focus of its policy. It has implemented strong and targeted economic and social policies to ensure that no one is left behind.

In response to the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda, China launched an impressive campaign called "Targeted Poverty Alleviation" with the aim of completely eradicating extreme poverty in rural areas by 2020, 10 years ahead of schedule.

President Xi Jinping identified eradicating poverty as one of three "tough battles" in the 2017-20 period. And to win the battle against poverty, the country launched "the largest poverty alleviation campaign in history", achieving astounding results.

Yunnan was one of the major battlefields in the country's fight against poverty, as 94 percent of the province is mountainous with relatively limited arable land and prone to frequent natural disasters including earthquakes and landslides.

China implemented targeted meas-



The Chinese experience in terms of socioeconomic development has not only benefited the Chinese people but also facilitated progress in many areas of the globalized world.

ures, including boosting local industrial development, employment, relocation, ecological compensation, education and training, and social security to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of 2020.

In 2021, the country declared a "complete victory" in eradicating absolute poverty, meeting the poverty reduction target of the UN 2030 Agenda a decade ahead of schedule.

China's advances in this regard have been uniquely impressive — it is the only country in the world to have progressed from a "low human development" in 1990 to a "high human development" today. The 2024 UN human development report attributed this achievement to the country's people-centered development philosophy. In absolute terms, China's Human Develop-

ment Index rose from 0.499 in 1990 to 0.788 in 2022.

China made a lot of these achievements by continuously increasing investments in education and healthcare. China has not only eliminated illiteracy but also is providing higher-quality education, and technical and vocational training, using new technologies in education to achieve inclusive and equitable development. Eradication of poverty, narrowing of the urban-rural income gap, and moving toward common prosperity are the major goals of China to achieve sustainable development.

What is equally impressive is that, for China, the eradication of absolute poverty is not the end of the story. It has vowed to continue promoting development and preventing people from slipping back into poverty by taking targeted measures and creating mechanisms for sustaining the poverty-alleviation achievements, reflecting its commitment to uplift the rural population.

China has made poverty-alleviation history, and is taking the next step to vitalize rural areas by promoting shared prosperity.

But while China has become a "moderately prosperous society in all respects", poverty remains acute in many regions of the world. There are many countries where poverty is enduring and where poverty deprives hundreds of millions of people of dignity and development. In such countries, the fight against poverty should

be strengthened and accelerated.

China's story is proof that developing countries can eradicate poverty through perseverance and sustained efforts. If China can make it, other developing countries can make it too. This is what China's battle against poverty conveys to the world.

The Chinese experience in terms of socioeconomic development has not only benefited the Chinese people but also facilitated progress in many areas of the globalized world.

After decades of remarkable progress in urbanization propelled China to become the world's second-largest economy, the Chinese government is ramping up efforts to achieve more balanced, coordinated development to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas.

By putting forward the great vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, China has reminded us that inclusiveness should always be a strategic priority.

In his famous speech "Make Poverty History" in 2005, the great fighter against apartheid and former South African president, Nelson Mandela, said: "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom."

The author is former director-general of UNESCO. This is an edited excerpt from her speech at the 2025 International Forum on Poverty Governance and Global Development on March 29 in Lushui, Yunnan province. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Lu Haina

Digital instruments empower women to break barriers

Since the digital economy has become a major force driving global economic and social development, it is imperative that women be empowered to play a bigger role in the country's development.

As a global leader in the digital economy, China has made remarkable achievements in technological innovation and application. It has been exploring and using digital technology to promote gender equality and protect women's rights, creating more development opportunities for women and contributing Chinese wisdom and strength to the global human rights cause.

China has always followed a people-centered development philosophy, and regards the protection of women's rights as an integral part of human rights. In this digital age, China has been empowering women through policy guidance, and by promoting technological innovation and social coordination. By taking measures to promote gender equality in fields such as the economy, education, healthcare and political participation, China is fulfilling its responsibilities as a major country.

Amid the booming digital economy, Chinese women are participating in economic and social development on an unprecedented scale. Digital technology provides more entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for women, particularly in the platform and digital economies. By opening online stores and engaging in livestreaming, women are not only achieving economic independence but also driving local development.

The government and social organizations have been collaborating to provide digital skills training for women. These measures have not only helped many women emerge out of poverty and realize their self-worth but also injected new momentum into socioeconomic development.

Besides, the widespread adoption of digital financial technology is providing more support for women entrepreneurs, and financial technology companies are offering customized financial services to women owners of small and micro businesses through big data and artificial intelligence. This is not only improving the economic status of women but also promoting rural vitalization and common prosperity.

Through big data analysis and AI, domestic violence incidents can be detected and intervened in almost immediately, providing essential safeguards for women.

Education is a cornerstone of gender equality. In this regard, digital technology has broken the geographical barriers for women, especially those women living in rural and remote areas, by enabling more women and girls to access high-quality education resources. Thanks to policy support and other incentives, an increasing number of women are joining the high-tech industry and becoming an important force driving innovation-led development.

Digital technology is also being used to improve women's digital literacy and professional skills, making it easier for them to find employment or start a business, thus narrowing the gender gap in the science and technology, and digital fields. Digital technology is also playing a significant role in promoting women's health. In rural areas, telemedicine is enabling women to access professional medical services more conveniently, helping them take better care of their health.

Moreover, China has developed various digital technology tools and applications to combat gender-based violence. Through big data analysis and AI, domestic violence incidents can be detected and intervened in almost immediately, providing essential safeguards for women.

The rapid development of digital technology has also opened new channels for women to participate in public life and political decision-making. China encourages women to engage in community governance and public policy discussions through e-government and social media platforms, offering more opportunities for women to voice their opinions and concerns.

Digital technology has become an essential tool for implementing gender equality policies. Online dissemination of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests has improved public awareness of women's rights. And social media platforms, as a vital channel for women to express their views and advocate for social progress, are enabling more and more women to participate in social discussions, and call for gender equality and improvement in relevant policies.

Digital platforms are also highlighting women's mutual assistance and public welfare programs. Many women are organizing public welfare activities with the help of online communities, providing support and legal aid for women and girls in need. This mutual assistance model, supported by digital technology, has strengthened the social cohesion among women's groups and contributed to the construction of a harmonious society.

China's efforts to better protect women's rights reflect its respect for and commitment to upholding human rights. The practice of encouraging women to participate in public affairs using digital technology has not only increased women's political engagement but also become a global model for women's empowerment.

The measures to empower women in the digital age show that digital technology is not only a driver of economic development but also a tool for promoting gender equality. China will continue to use digital technology to empower women and explore more innovative models. Only by ensuring that women participate and benefit equally in public affairs can we truly achieve the goals of sustainable development and building of a more inclusive and equal society.

The author is a professor with the Law School of Renmin University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Massoud Amin

When price tags speak, US should listen

The United States' trade policy is likely to take a sharp turn on Wednesday, which President Donald Trump has named "Liberation Day", the beginning of reciprocal tariffs on every country that taxes American goods. A day later, a sweeping 25 percent blanket tariff is expected to be imposed on all US imports, across every product, every port, and every sector.

The theory is simple: raise foreign prices high enough, and Americans will buy domestic products. But this isn't the 1950s. The logic doesn't hold in a globalized, interconnected, and precision-based economy.

More than 40 percent of US automobile components are imported. A 25 percent tariff doesn't protect US automakers — it puts additional pressures on them. Ford, GM and Tesla rely on global supply chains. Adding a tariff at that scale increases the cost of doing business in the US and pushes that cost onto consumers.

The Peterson Institute for International Economics estimates that these tariffs could raise the average price of a car by \$3,000 to \$5,000. Worse, the effects won't stop with vehicles. Food, electronics, appliances, construction materials and farm equipment — all will be affected. As a result, American families will have to pay more for less.

Tariffs don't just raise prices. They scramble signals. And confusion, not clarity, spreads.

Markets respond. Businesses freeze. Households hesitate.

The University of Michigan's Consumer Sentiment Index has dropped



As individuals and as a nation, the degree to which we can grow is directly proportional to the amount of truth we can accept about ourselves without running away.

to its lowest point since the early COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Five-year expectations are at a 13-year low.

When confidence breaks, people pull back, delaying purchases, slowing investment and reducing hiring. Growth contracts. Momentum stalls.

Inflation is still high. The US Federal Reserve's preferred inflation metric — the Personal Consumption Expenditures index — rose 0.4 percent in February, or 2.8 percent year-on-year.

That's too high to justify cutting interest rates, but too painful for families already struggling with higher costs. Since January, the Dow Jones has dropped about 1,000 points. Volatility is rising across oil, semiconductor, shipping and metal sectors. Canada and the European Union are planning

countermeasures. Asia's supply chains are shifting in real time.

The signals are flashing red. But the real issue isn't the noise; it's the direction.

Resilience doesn't come from slogans. And economic power isn't built by turning backward. Real growth emerges from advanced systems: AI-integrated services, energy innovation, infrastructure modernization, and next-generation logistics. That's where investment is flowing. That's where countries compete — and win.

US cities such as Minneapolis, Austin, Boston and Raleigh are already showing the way. They are investing in high-temperature superconducting transmission lines, digital grid infrastructure, cybersecurity and industrial automation, which are assets of a resilient, modern economy.

We don't need to retreat. We need to retool with precision.

Tariffs are a tool from another era. In the past, they offered leverage in a simpler world of national economies and slower change. But in today's system — fluid, fast, and interdependent — blanket tariffs are a blunt instrument. They are a sledgehammer where a scalpel is required. In a digitalized, distributed economy, force creates instability.

We've seen this before. Once a symbol of industrial efficiency, Japan entered a decades-long economic stagnation as it failed to adapt to the changing times. Precision alone didn't save Japan. Innovation did — and the lack of it nearly undid its economy.

If the US wants to be a world leader, it must do so not through nostalgia,

but through strategy. That means investing in critical infrastructure — not just ports and roads, but digital backbones, energy networks and regional resilience hubs. It means aligning trade, technology and workforce development — and devising policies that move in rhythm with the future, not against it.

It also means being honest with ourselves.

As individuals and as a nation, the degree to which we can grow is directly proportional to the amount of truth we can accept about ourselves without running away. The truth is: The US is not where it should have been. It is still the most dynamic economy in the world — but only if it acts like it, if its leadership has clear vision, and if it treats prices as signals and pays heed when they scream.

This moment is not just about trade. It's about what the US is — and where it intends to go.

Should it cling to a past of tariff walls and isolation? Or should it step forward with coordination, investment, and vision? Should it react, or should it lead?

History does not wait for hesitation. Neither does the global economy.

Now is the time to build a future, not to defend a fading past.

The author is an IEEE and ASME fellow, chairman and president of Energy Policy and Security Associates, and a professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota.

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

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

DJOMART OTORBAEV

Toward a new era in East-West connectivity

The Middle Corridor between China and Europe has the potential to reshape the economic and geopolitical landscape of the Eurasia

European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will visit Uzbekistan on April 3 and 4 to attend the inaugural Central Asia-European Union Summit. The presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will also participate in the summit.



The summit provides a crucial opportunity for the EU to demonstrate its geopolitical interest in enhancing bilateral engagement and expanding regional cooperation with Central Asian countries. In the evolving geopolitical landscape of Eurasia, the relationship between Central Asia and the EU is becoming increasingly strategic.

It was announced last year that the G7 countries were ready to invest up to \$200 billion in infrastructure projects in Central Asia.

Regional transport cooperation is poised to significantly impact the economy of Europe, Central Asian countries and China, as the trade land bridge between China and Europe, Central Asia, is becoming increasingly vital.

Rail freight volumes between China and Europe, via Central Asia, continue to grow rapidly. In 2024, trains made 19,000 trips, representing a 10 percent increase from the previous year. They transported over 2 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of cargo, representing a 9 percent increase from the previous year. First launched in 2011 as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the service has linked 227 cities across 25 European countries and more than 100 cities in 11 Asian countries. By Dec 3, 2024, more than 11 million TEUs of goods have been transported, with total value exceeding \$420 billion.

Beijing is prioritizing this area, with Premier Li Qiang specifically noting in his report to China's top legislature last month that China will "ensure the stable and smooth operation of China-Europe freight trains".

European countries seeking to reduce their dependence on rail transport to China through Russian territory have led the development of a shorter alternative route through Central Asia, known as the Trans-Caspi-

an International Transport Route. More commonly known as the Middle Corridor, this is a network of transport routes that follows the ancient Silk Road, extending from China to Europe via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus, ultimately reaching Turkey and the Black Sea. Operational since 2017, the Middle Corridor is a multimodal transport system that relies significantly on existing core rail and port infrastructure.

The volume of freight traffic along the Middle Corridor increased by 63 percent in the first 11 months of 2024, reaching 4.1 million metric tons. Meanwhile, container traffic rose 2.7 times, with shipments from China increasing 25-fold. The World Bank predicts that with the modernization of transport infrastructure, annual rail transport volumes along the Middle Corridor could reach 11 million tons by 2030.

To achieve this, the EU committed 10 billion euros (\$10.8 billion) to infrastructure through its Global Gateway initiative and is contemplating increasing its involvement.

Although the EU aims to develop the Middle Corridor, specifically to bypass Russia, it may ultimately end up indirectly enhancing Russia's international connectivity, as it could connect the Middle Corridor to the forthcoming International North-South Transport Corridor, a 7,200-kilometer multimodal transport corridor that combines road, rail and maritime routes via Azerbaijan and Iran.

The Middle Corridor will also facilitate active trade between the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. To maximize the development of the Middle Corridor, the EU could leverage the Middle Corridor on two fronts. The first front is internal, concerning the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries. The second front is external and involves China and Turkey.

The Middle Corridor would enable China to strengthen its economic ties along the entire route to the West. This will enhance China's economic influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, promoting regional stability. The corridor not only gives China access to Europe but also to the Middle East. Its development has the potential to reshape the economic and geopolitical landscape of Eurasia, with significant implications for

global trade flows and regional power dynamics.

As the natural entry point of the Middle Corridor into Europe, Turkey stands to benefit from its development. Europe could seize this opportunity to reassure Ankara that Turkey will continue to play a primary role in the EU's external relations. By doing so, it would secure Turkey as an ally in the EU's ambitions for the Middle Corridor and foster a partnership with the Central Asian countries.

In addition to the EU's existing commitment to infrastructure, its involvement is anticipated to extend beyond mere connectivity. The Middle Corridor would genuinely flourish if it became a fully integrated economic corridor, incorporating energy and industrial activities along the route, which would add significant value to the regional economy.

The East-West railway lines are set to converge in Central Asia with the North-South railways currently under construction. These railways will connect Russia and Central Asia through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Iran to the deep-water ports of the Indian Ocean. Consequently, the intersection of the East-West and North-South railway routes in Central Asia will transform the region into a major transportation hub for the entire Eurasian continent.

The China-Europe railway bridge across Central Asia serves as a vital lifeline for all countries along the Great Silk Road. It symbolizes not only the revival of ancient trade routes but also fosters cultural and humanitarian exchanges between the East and the West. This new route will connect people and communities, strengthen cooperation, and open doors to countless opportunities for development and prosperity in the region. Further development of these railways will enable all countries along the legendary Silk Road to trade and collaborate, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of all parties involved.

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SONG JIN

Development shift

An inclusive and coordinated governance system is urgently needed for the global community

Established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, the World Bank has served as a key institution for global development financing. For nearly 80 years, the United States has maintained decisive influence over its operations. However, this governance structure now faces fundamental challenges.



During his first term as US president, Donald Trump rejected the World Bank's request for additional capital on the grounds of efficiency concerns and criticized it for extending loans to emerging economies such as China. Now in his second term, Trump has explicitly distanced the US from international development affairs, shutting down the US Agency for International Development, leading scholars to speculate on the possibility of the US withdrawing from the World Bank. The policy shift is rooted in deep structural transformations. On the international level, the collective rise of the Global South is reshaping global governance, continually weakening US dominance over the multilateral financial order and leading to a decline in the US' influence within the World Bank.

At the same time, the global development financing system has evolved beyond the institutional framework of Bretton Woods. The emergence of diversified funding sources and innovative financing tools has significantly diminished the World Bank's leverage over policy reforms in developing countries, and directly curtailed the US' capability in wielding its international influence through the institutional leverage.

A more profound driver is the domestic political changes in the US, which have led to a systemic disengagement from multilateral development cooperation. In the beginning of 2025, the Trump administration has worked on shutting down the USAID. As a key tool of US development diplomacy, the USAID has played an irreplaceable role in advancing political agendas, maintaining geopolitical advantages, and safeguarding US political, economic and military interests. The announcement of the closing of the USAID sparked strong reactions from US think tanks. Mainstream institutions such as the Brookings Institution have warned that cutting the USAID would severely damage the US' soft power projection. However, it is worth noting that the discussion around the agency's closure has largely focused on power politics dynamics, with much less attention given to its negative impact on global development governance. In fact, from cutting the USAID to the potential withdrawal from the World Bank, Trump's decisions have not been impulsive. A 2021 survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs showed that US citizens overwhelmingly prioritize domestic issues over international influence, with 81 percent of respondents more concerned about domestic challenges and only 19 percent focusing on external threats. This inward-looking sentiment provides a strong public foundation for Trump's "America First" policy.

From the perspective of comparative politics, using development aid to serve diplomatic strategy is not unprecedented. For instance, the United Kingdom merged its Department for International Development and the Foreign Office in 2020. However, if the US should withdraw from the World Bank, the repercussions would be far more profound. At a time of worsening global governance deficit and international trust crises, the major power abandoning its multilateral responsibilities could trigger a chain reaction, jeopardizing the collective action needed to address transnational challenges such as climate change and public health. Such a unilateral retreat would not only violate the ethics for global development but also undermine the international cooperation needed to mitigate systemic risks.

In the case of the US insisting on withdrawing from the World Bank, even if a future administration decided to rejoin, the policy reversals would have lasting short- and long-term impacts, directly shaking the global system for development governance.

First, there would be a structural funding shortage. As the world's largest bilateral aid provider and the largest shareholder of the World Bank, the US' departure would create a new financial bottleneck at a time when development financing is already under strain, despite the fact that the shock could be partially offset by the current diversified global development financing landscape, including foreign direct investment, international capital market financing, philanthropic donations, nongovernmental organization funding and innovative financial instruments.

Second, the World Bank's governance structure would need to be restructured. Since the agency's establishment, the World Bank president has always been an American. The change of this tradition would not only raise procedural issues related to leadership transitions but also fundamental shifts in the organization's development philosophies and decision-making mechanisms.

Finally, if the US were to reduce its contributions or no longer gives its political support to the World Bank, the bank's credit rating could face long-term risks. Moreover, the negotiations about its equity structure adjustments would become even more complex and difficult. It would require existing member states to reach a new consensus on capital contributions, voting rights distribution and other issues, a process that could involve prolonged negotiations.

Deeper challenges would lie in the structural reshaping of the global development governance system. If the US withdraws from the World Bank, it would become imperative to construct a new cooperation framework among multilateral institutions and third-party leading players. Such institutional reconstruction would not only involve the arrangement of emergency funding, but would also necessitate profound transformations of the international development system in three areas.

First, as development financing becomes increasingly diverse, an effective mechanism of coordinated governance is urgently needed. Key structural challenges include the efficiency losses caused by fragmented funding sources, a "race to the bottom" driven by differentiated aid conditions, and the lack of reform incentives for recipient countries. These structural dilemmas make traditional aid-driven development models less effective in generating momentum for sustainable development.

Second, amid a global economic slowdown, development financing must shift from quantity to improvement in quality. This requires international financial institutions to draw on productive financing models and enhance the multiplier effect of funding utilization.

Third, traditional poverty-reducing models have proved to be increasingly inadequate in addressing new, complex challenges, such as climate change,

technological disruptions and global supply chain restructuring. To avoid using outdated approaches in a rapidly changing world, international development institutions need to shift from focusing on single-dimensional economic indicators to developing holistic resilience-building approaches, and from applying standardized solutions to designing differentiated strategies.

The dilemma faced by the World Bank is not an isolated case but rather a reflection of the broader decline of the global governance system. The United Nations' ineffectiveness in conflict mediation, the World Trade Organization's ineffectiveness in resolving trade disputes, and other similar issues all point to the systemic challenges posed to the post-World War II global governance framework.

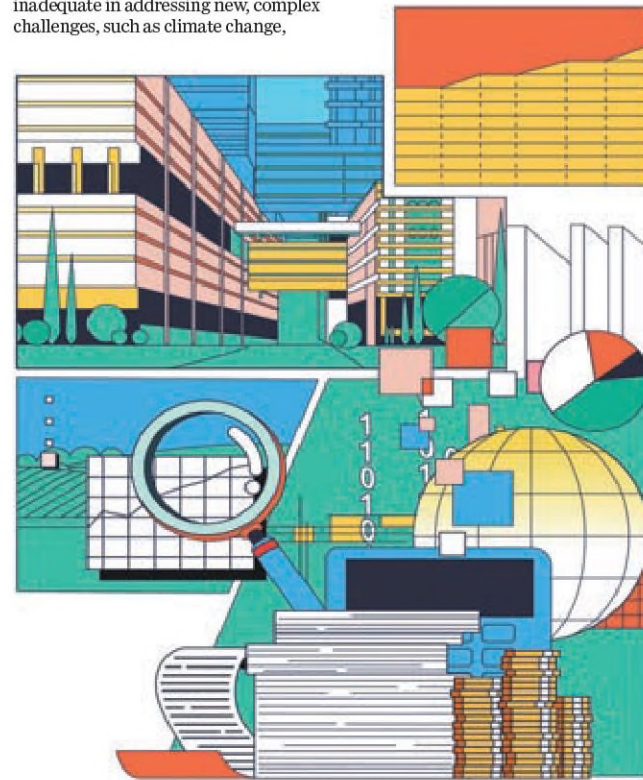
The weak global governance is characterized by key features. First, escalation of geopolitical conflicts and the rising uncertainties that are driving a restructuring of global value chains. Regional governance may replace the traditional "homogeneous" global governance model to play a bigger role in the new structures.

Second, agenda-based club-style governance models may partially replace the functions of traditional international institutions. During the transition, it is essential to reconstruct institutional frameworks to enhance the voice of developing countries in agenda setting, the formulation of standards and resources allocation. At the same time, priorities need to be given to specific regional and national development needs rather than methodologies, ensuring that development strategies align with local realities.

Third, it's advisable to guard against risks from governance fragmentation. If multilateralism gives way to regional bloc rivalries, collective action to tackle transnational challenges such as climate change and public health will be hampered.

Experiences have shown that global development has never been a zero-sum game. In an era of deepening technological revolutions and intensifying climate crises, the international community needs an inclusive and coordinated governance system more than ever. The reform of the World Bank should be the start of a new order for the global development community to create a future of shared prosperity in an increasingly turbulent world.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

LIFE



Milk-based dishes (from left): fried milk; milk-braised vegetables and seafood; and double-layered milk pudding. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Documentary milks universal connections

Series traces the evolution of dairy and examines the way it bridges cultures around the world, **Li Yingxue** reports.

From frothy lattes to creamy cheeses, from the delicate folds of a milk fan, or *rus-han*, thin sheet-like dairy product made from heated and stretched milk, to the silkiness of double-layered milk pudding from Shunde in Guangdong province, some of the world's favorite flavors trace back to one simple source: milk.

More than just an ingredient, milk weaves through cultures and traditions, linking the Maasai warriors of Africa, the wedding rituals of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region's Tajik residents, and the generations of people who have perfected the art of making dairy delicacies.

This cultural connection lies at the heart of the new documentary *Milk: A Running River of Civilization*, streaming on Tencent Video, which takes viewers on a journey across continents and centuries.

Seen through the eyes of farmers, chefs and historians, the six-episode series reveals the way milk has shaped civilizations, bridging the worlds of nomads and settlers, survival and indulgence.

Since its release on March 6, it has been at the top of Tencent Video's documentary rankings, earning a 9.3/10 rating. One viewer, Zhou Yuqin, praised it as "a rare gem among food documentaries." "In an era dominated by short, chaotic videos, this film is a welcome change — the clear narrative and sumptuous visuals bring a sense of calm and engagement," she wrote.

According to executive producer Zhu Lixian, the documentary took two years to complete.

"We wanted to re-imagine how food documentaries are made, capturing not just the flavors but the human stories behind them," Zhu says. "The story of milk not only reflects humanity's reliance on food, but also highlights its connection to the future and evolving market demands, adding vitality to the documentary."

Building on past successes, producer He Shifei says that the production team has long focused on innovation in food and culture documentaries, continuously pushing the boundaries of storytelling and cinematography. From the *Once Upon a Bite* series to *China Beyond Tastes*, they have explored a variety



Clockwise from top: People in Tashikorgan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, participate in the traditional sport of Buzkashi. Producer He Shifei (left) directs the shoot. Chief director Chen Lei (second from right) at a cheese filming location. Chief director Deng Jie on set.

“We ... realize that milk is not just a simple beverage, it is one of the most profound, yet overlooked witnesses of human civilization.”

Chen Lei, documentary director

of culinary traditions. With *Milk*, they sought to highlight the historical and cultural depth of dairy.

"Milk is a universal ingredient, yet its significance varies across regions and traditions. From the frozen landscapes of Northern Europe to equatorial islands and the vast Ulan Buh Desert, dairy has shaped local cuisines and customs," He says.

The documentary illustrates milk's influence through beverages such as butter tea of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Hong

Kong's silk-stocking milk tea, as well as Malaysia's pulled tea, British afternoon tea, and Pakistani clay-pot *chai*, each of which tells its own cultural story.

Milk has accompanied humanity through key transitions: from hunting and gathering to agriculture, and later, to industrial civilization. "The history of milk runs parallel to civilization itself. Every era has its own story. We wanted to bring these narratives to life by focusing on communities where

milk remains essential," He says.

"Beyond its nutritional value, milk has an emotional significance. It is a symbol of heritage, connection, and continuity," she adds.

The documentary presents an in-depth look at the lives of the Maasai plains people of East Africa, where arable land is scarce and vegetables are virtually nonexistent. With livestock too precious to slaughter for meat, milk is their primary source of sustenance and nutrition.

Despite this minimal diet, which is supplemented by maize porridge mixed with milk, the Maasai exhibit remarkable endurance, often working tirelessly throughout the day. "When we arrived for filming, we immediately felt how central cattle and milk are to their lives," says chief director Deng Jie.

The Maasai's reliance on milk extends beyond nutrition. It may have partly contributed to help shape their resilience and sharpen their instincts in the wild.

"Even with a telephoto lens, we struggled to spot wildlife, but they could instantly detect elephants in the distant jungle," Deng says.

Elephants can pose a threat to villages, so the Maasai have developed an acute awareness of their presence. "They can also quickly identify fast-moving warthogs and hyenas, which deeply impressed us. I believe this sharpness is closely linked to their diet," Deng says.

For chief director Chen Lei, the series is more than a documentary about food. It is an exploration of how a single ingredient has shaped human history.

Before filming, he and his team researched milk's evolution from an accidental discovery to an essential daily staple. "We were amazed to realize that milk is not just a simple beverage, it is one of the most profound, yet overlooked witnesses of human civilization," he says.

"Food is an emotional bond that connects people, but milk goes beyond that. It ties together families, communities and even entire cultures across the world," Chen says. "Behind every drop of milk is a story of survival, wisdom and progress."

He also highlights milk's universal presence in diets, fostering shared experiences and cultural connections. "Common foods create a sense of understanding among people. Milk is one of those rare ingredients that transcends borders," he says.

For Chen, the documentary marks a return to global storytelling after the pandemic. "The world may have changed in many ways but it remains as beautiful as ever," he adds.

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The ink painter who drew inspiration from the resilience of life

By **LIN QI**
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The popular subjects depicted by Qi Baishi (1864-1957), a leading painter of the 20th century, include shrimp, birds, chickens, fish and other animals, which he drew on to playfully celebrate the essential beauty of nature.

Qi also left a body of figurative paintings, some in which he imagined celestial figures in folk tales, imbued with his observation of human nature. For example, he revisited Tie Guai, an immortal who carries a gourd around filled with medicines to relieve pain, and Zhong Kui, "the king of ghosts," who hunts evil spirits and protects people and their houses. He also made a seal on which he engraved these words: "I'm old, in good health, and not envious of (the benefits of) being an immortal."

The painter experienced the vicissitudes of 20th-century China — from social instability and wars to peace — but in good or bad times, he celebrated the vigor of nature and the resilience of life through his fine brushwork.



Left: In the *Qi Baishi: Inspiration in Ink* exhibition held in the United States, *Letters from Baishi*, an installation from which the audience can keep souvenirs, contains letters with paintings, seal impressions and writings of well-wishes by the master. **Right:** Qi's works show the essential beauty of nature and life's simple pleasures. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Beijing Fine Art Academy, where Qi was the first honorary chairman and which houses a collection of his work, has taken the painter's animated world of living things and his philosophical outlook on life to San Francisco's Asian Art Museum.

Nearly 50 paintings and corre-

spondence with friends and collectors are on display in the exhibition *Qi Baishi: Inspiration in Ink*, which runs until April 7. It will travel to Boston afterward.

Qi has been exhibited before in San Francisco. The de Young Museum organized a solo exhibition of his work in 1960, showing over 150 pieces.

The current exhibition continues the Beijing Fine Art Academy's endeavors to commemorate the 160th anniversary last year of the painter's birth, and to raise his international profile.

According to Du Yuxin, a curator at the Beijing Fine Art Academy, the show illustrates Qi's efforts to

achieve artistic creativity. "Born of humble country origins in Xiangtan, Hunan province, he was first a carpenter, a portrait maker, then a seal engraver in Beijing. He reformed ink art and became accomplished."

Du says that all his life, Qi was down-to-earth and sincere. "He was determined to depict whatever he

saw and felt, his strokes hail the greatness of nature, mountains and rivers, and also the small things, like insects and flower buds, revealing life's simple pleasures."

Interactive installations and workshops are also part of the show. One experience is *Letters from Baishi*, in which dozens of envelopes have been hung in midair for visitors to take as souvenirs. Inside, there is a letter containing images of paintings, seal impressions and greetings from Qi.

Right next to it is another installation, *Time-travel Postbox*, which permits visitors to send him their replies. One visitor named Yognandam Maharaj wrote: "Thank you for creating your art. It reminded me that this is where we come from. The foundation of human culture is art. It is our duty to create and share. This is resistance, perseverance."

Wu Hongliang, director of the Beijing Fine Art Academy, says they have held 20 exhibitions to mark Qi's 160th anniversary, some of them abroad, and they are seeking possible collaborations with overseas museums that also have pieces of Qi's art in their collections.

LIFE



Above: Under the baton of conductor Petr Popelka, the Wiener Symphoniker kicked off their nine-day trip in Beijing with a concert at Beijing Performing Arts Centre on Saturday. **Below:** Popelka made his debut in China with the concert the same day. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A symphony of celebration

Vienna orchestra honors its 125-year history with a series of concerts in China's capital city, **Chen Nan** reports.

With the soft morning sunlight illuminating the ancient city of Beijing, a special performance by a brass trio from the Wiener Symphoniker is about to begin at the foot of Yongdingmen's stone wall, one of the historical gates of the old city, located in the southern part of the capital.

The trio, consisting of seasoned musicians — trumpet player Christian Low, horn player Markus Obmann, and bass trombone player Wolfgang Pfistermuller — begins with the timeless *Summer-time*, a classic jazz standard by George Gershwin. The trio continues, improvising and weaving in and out of the familiar melody, fluid and natural like a conversation. The three move effortlessly to the next piece, *Invention No 7* by Daniel Muck. The Austrian composer and conductor, known for his diverse works in symphonic, brass and wind orchestra genres, composed this piece specifically for the trio, according to Pfistermuller.

"It's a lovely morning and here we are playing music in this beautiful park. The music flows naturally and the crowds are enjoying it," says Pfistermuller.

The Wiener Symphoniker, one of the world's most prestigious orchestras and celebrating its 125th anniversary, made its Beijing Performing Arts Center debut on Saturday, and performed again on Monday. The two concerts kicked off its nine-day music and cultural exchange tour in Beijing, which includes three performances at the National Centre for the Performing Arts concert hall from Wednesday to Friday.

Under the baton of newly appointed chief conductor Petr Popelka, the orchestra brings the sounds of Vienna to Beijing, inter-

twining tradition with romantic flair in a concert that fuses East and West, past and present.

On Monday, the orchestra embraced Beijing's urban fabric, engaging in meaningful cultural exchanges through its music.

Besides Yongdingmen, the orchestra's musicians visited two other iconic landmarks along Beijing Central Axis — the Temple of Heaven on Monday and the Drum Tower on Tuesday. These performances served as a unique opportunity to bring music to some of the city's most historic sites, creating an immersive experience outside the concert hall's walls.

"We are happy and proud to have five concerts in Beijing. It's very special for us during our anniversary season. We are celebrating our 125th anniversary with a whole season of highlights, and one of the highlights is our residency in Beijing," says Jan Nast, intendant of the orchestra.

"The idea is to bring different kinds of music to Beijing," he adds, noting that these performances aim to carry forward the legacy of German-Austrian classical music, offering Beijing audiences a taste of Europe's finest orchestral traditions.

During their concerts at the Beijing Performing Arts Center and the NCPA, the orchestra presented iconic masterpieces, such as Wagner's *Die Walkure* and Mahler's *Symphony No 4*, showcasing the pinnacle of symphonic art.

Marking the 200th anniversary of Johann Strauss II's birth, the orchestra also performed a selection of the composer's most beloved waltzes, polkas and operettas, including *Eine Nacht in Venedig* (A Night in Venice) and *Blumenfest-Polka* (Flower Festival Polka), *Op III*.

According to Nast, along with



Left: A string quartet of the orchestra performs at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing on Monday.



Right: On the same day, a brass trio performs at Yongdingmen, one of the ancient gates of the capital.

the performances by the whole orchestra, soloists also made a significant impact during the trip to Beijing. For example, Peter Dorfmayr, the horn player, took center stage on Saturday, delivering a performance of Richard Strauss' *Horn*

Concerto No 1 in E-flat major. Composed when Strauss was only 18 to celebrate his father's birthday, this piece showcases a lyrical beauty combined with robust heroism.

The orchestra also delved into Mozart's *Symphony No 38 in D*

Major, Prague, a work that holds special significance for conductor Popelka who was born in Prague and trained as a double-bass player, deeply connecting him to the Czech Republic's rich musical traditions.

Making his debut in China with

this ongoing tour, he expresses his pride in presenting this piece: "It is indelibly linked to the city of Prague and Mozart's relationship with the Czech people."

The conductor recalls that, even as a teenager, he regularly drove from Prague to Vienna with his parents to listen to the greatest orchestras in the world.

"To me, the Wiener Symphoniker is the musical embodiment of Vienna, an orchestra that captures and evokes the city's spirit, an ensemble with a great tradition but, above all, an orchestra that has always encapsulated a modern, pioneering spirit," he says.

"For musicians who perform every night, it is dangerous for music to become routine or a 'duty'. Some conductors may not emphasize the significance of performing certain pieces at specific venues. I expect to gain inspiration and embrace a variety of ideas," he says. "This is why I took this job. In working with the Wiener Symphoniker, I feel a sense of curiosity within the orchestra, and the joy of music 'being born' together."

Popelka, along with principal artists of the string and brass sections, also visited the China Conservatory of Music on Monday, where they held two master classes. In the evening, the conductor led the student symphony orchestra in a rehearsal of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a famous suite of musical compositions by Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky.

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AI opens up new opportunities as it closes urban-rural education gap

China is riding the wave of an AI-powered transformation. As artificial intelligence reshapes industries and daily life, it is not only driving automation and increasing efficiency but also unlocking new possibilities.

Picture this: The classroom blackboard is replaced with a big screen and students click on tablets to answer questions instead of writing with pencils. AI makes it a reality, offering novel learning pathways for Chinese students and bridging the urban-rural digital divide.

At a middle school in Guiyang, Guizhou province, English teacher Zeng Xing found AI to be a game-changer during her 17-year career thanks to a smart classroom system developed by Chinese AI giant iFLYTEK.

Zeng assigns exercises to her students via teaching tablets in the classroom and the students can instantly submit their answers back. Simultaneously, the big screen at the front of the classroom shows the detailed answers of each student.

By analyzing results with AI and big data, the system enables Zeng to deliver tailored instructions that address the specific needs of each student. "We can now quickly identify students' weaknesses and make teaching plans accordingly, which is far more efficient than before," she says.

The smart classroom system also enables students to improve their speaking skills through personalized, interactive dialogues sourced from a vast database of English movies, news and poetry. AI can evaluate students' pronunciation and provide feedback, helping them speak more accurately and with greater confidence.

"AI has created opportunities for basic education in remote areas like Guizhou," says Huang Hui, head of Zeng's middle school where complex terrain and challenging transportation systems limit educational resources.

AI-powered tools play an important role in bridging urban-rural education gaps by expanding teach-



New technology enables greater educational experience as a Chinese expert showcases brain-machine connection on March 26 in Beijing. XIAO YUJIU / XINHUA

ing resources and improving accessibility, Huang adds.

Besides improving the effectiveness of classroom learning, AI also enriches students' extracurricular experiences.

At Tsinghua University Primary School, students participate in AI-assisted physical activities during break time. By waving their hands, they can activate smart sports equipment to track their

exercise duration and frequency.

In addition to basic education, AI has a significant impact on higher education. As Chinese AI assistant DeepSeek gains popularity, many colleges and universities have announced its integration into their server systems.

Colleges and universities, as innovation hubs and talent incubators, should actively embrace new technologies and take on a leading role, says Wang Lei, professor at Beijing Normal University's School of Government.

"When conducting scientific research, tasks like project design, mass data collection and literature collation are time-intensive," says Qian Minghui, who works at the Renmin University of China. "Using DeepSeek with a dedicated document database can greatly improve efficiency. It acts as a research assistant and can help provide research clues and identify suitable partners."

The AI-led technological revolution brings major opportunities for education, China's Minister of

Education Huai Jinping said during an interview on the sidelines of the national legislature's annual session.

He revealed that China will release a white paper on AI education in 2025 to help equip students with enhanced literacy and skills for the digital and AI era.

In the upcoming fall semester, primary and secondary schools in Beijing will offer at least eight class hours of AI instruction per academic year to nurture future-oriented and innovative talent.

Despite AI's advantages in transforming education, it raises concerns about data security, privacy and academic integrity.

"It is crucial to establish policies on AI usage, enhance technological oversight, and strengthen ethics education for teachers and students," says Tang Liang, deputy director of the information center at the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences.

XINHUA

LIFE

Beijing afloat on April sea of films

Festival's 15th edition brings a wealth of movies, old, new, domestic and international, to capital audiences, **Xu Fan** reports.

In a feast for cinema enthusiasts, the 15th Beijing International Film Festival will kick off on April 18 and run until April 26, with a roster of nearly 300 movies from around the world, organizers revealed.

Jiang Wen, the filmmaker known for blockbusters *Let the Bullets Fly* and *Hidden Man*, is jury president for the Tiantan Award, the festival's top honor.

Well-known jurors from Chinese-language cinema include Joan Chen, the Chinese American actress who shot to fame in Bernardo Bertolucci's Oscar-winning feature *The Last Emperor*, Hong Kong art director Tim Yip, known for his costume design for Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and actress Ni Ni, whose recent hit was the suspense film *Lost in the Stars*.

Foreign jurors include British director David Yates, Finnish director Teemu Nikki, and Swiss director-actor Vincent Perez.

Xu Tao, executive deputy secretary-general of the festival's organizing committee, says the event marks the first time Yates — who is best known for directing the last four *Harry Potter* and three *Fantastic Beasts* films — will serve as juror of an international film festival.

She adds that all seven jurors have collectively won 39 awards at A-list international film festivals, bringing this event's 15-year cumulative total to 508 awards won by jury panel members, further solidifying its credentials.

Ten Tiantan awards will be short-listed from the 15 nominated films, which in turn were chosen from 1,794 submissions from 103 countries and regions, a remarkable 18.9 percent increase on last year's 1,509 films.

Three Chinese movies have earned nominations: actress Ma Li's *Better Me, Better You*, about a rural carer's bond with an elderly woman; *Deep in the Mountains*, which follows a police officer's investigation into multiple crimes; *Trapped*, the account of a small town's fight against 44 armed gangsters.

Other nominated foreign films also include *Apollo by Day Athena by Night* (Turkey), *BAUS: The Ship's Voyage Continues* (Japan) and *Frieda's Case* (Switzerland).

The Forward Future Section, the festival's second competition category which seeks to solicit the first or second films by new directors, has invited Hungarian filmmaker Bela Tarr to chair the panel, with the other four jurors being actor Song Yang, actress Jin Chen, actor Hiroyuki Tanaka, who is better known as Sabu, and Swiss director-writer Cyril Schaublin.

Nearly 300 Chinese and foreign films will be screened multiple times at 34 cinemas in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, including one with immersive facilities.

Lin Siwei, deputy director of the China Film Archive, says that this year marks the 120th anniversary of the birth of the first Chinese film, *Dingjun Mountain*. In celebration, the festival will hold a special exhibition of Chinese films and screen 10 Peking Opera films at the Daguanlou Cinema, one of Beijing's earliest theaters.

As the year also marks the 130th anniversary of the world's first cinema and the 80th anniversary of the



Top and above left: Fifteen films are in the running for the 10 Tiantan awards, the Beijing International Film Festival's top honor. Nominees include the Chinese feature *Better Me, Better You* and *Frieda's Case* from Switzerland, this year's Guest Country of Honor. **Above right:** The panel for the Tiantan Award, with renowned filmmaker Jiang Wen (center) serving as jury president. **Left:** Xu Tao, executive deputy secretary-general of the film festival's organizing committee, unveils this year's poster. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

end of World War II, the festival will show a number of war-related films, including French film *Shoah* (1985), American movie *The Thin Red Line* (1998), and German historical war drama *Downfall* (2004). Another highlight of the festival will be a retrospective of classic films by legendary masters, including a special screening dedicated to Robert Altman — the late American director who received an honorary Oscar for

lifetime achievement in 2006. "The screening selection not only focused on classics but also highlighted cutting-edge new releases. We hope it will serve as a tribute to cinema's everlasting magic and allow the audience to have a more immersive experience (with special facilities like virtual reality equipment)," says Lin. *Ne Zha 2*, the most commercially successful Chinese film, which has

stormed into the global box-office list as the fifth highest-grossing film of all time, will feature in an exhibition of hand-drawn posters by director Yang Yu, who is better known as Jiaozhi. It was also announced that Chen Sicheng, a filmmaker who has contributed to the industrialization of Chinese cinema, will be president of the final jury for Project Pitches, a section that seeks to identify and

nurture promising new domestic creative forces. Inspired by the coiling dragon caisson ceiling of the Forbidden City's Wanchun Pavilion, the festival poster's kaleidoscopic pattern symbolizes cinema's focus on the many facets of the world, according to the organizers. *Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn*

Dreaming of China's classic red chamber in Turkish

ISTANBUL — In a significant step for cross-cultural literary exchange, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a famous 18th-century Chinese novel, has been translated into Turkish for the first time.

Released in January, the translation is the culmination of a five-year effort by Giray Fidan, a Sinologist at the Ankara Haci Bayram Veli University, who hopes to introduce the complex narrative of love, power, and impermanence to Turkish readers.

Written by Cao Xueqin during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), *Dream of the Red Chamber* chronicles the opulent rise and tragic decline of the house of Jia, a fictionalized representation of Cao's own aristocratic family.

Interlacing themes of fate, spirituality, and societal stratification, the novel is celebrated for its psychological depth and vivid portrayal of traditions, from court etiquette to traditional medicine.

Alongside *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, it forms the quartet of Chinese classics that have shaped the country's literary consciousness for centuries.

Fidan, a professor in the Department of Eastern Languages and Literatures, describes the translation process as a dialogue across time and space.

He explains that so far, he has translated only the first 30 chapters of the 120-chapter novel, noting the considerable effort involved in rendering such a monumental work. His research included consulting experts in a range of fields, such as classical Chinese architecture, herbal medicine, and Qing-era folklore, to ensure that both language and cultural nuances are captured accurately.

The novel's structure, Fidan says, is strikingly modern: each chapter ends with a cliff-hanger, a narrative device Cao used to hook readers, akin to that used in today's binge-worthy TV series.

Cao's aristocratic family fell into ruin during his youth, giving him unique insight into both the elite and commoners. "The novel is not just for the highly cultured or aristocratic. It bridges these worlds, making it accessible to all," Fidan adds.

For over 250 years, *Dream of the Red Chamber* has spawned a dedicated academic discipline in China: "Redology", in which scholars dissect its symbolism, historical echoes, and even culinary details.

Fidan hopes the Turkish edition will ignite similar fervor, believing Turkish readers, too, will find layers to unravel in this book.

To aid readers, he plans a companion guidebook decoding the novel's sprawling cast and cultural nuances.

The translation arrives amid growing Turkish interest in Chinese culture, in particular literature. Fidan envisions the novel as a catalyst for deeper Sino-Turkish dialogue.

"To understand China, you must read its history and then its literature," he says.

XINHUA

With 10-minute plays, director puts the theater into reality TV

By XING WEN
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In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare writes: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." This timeless line finds modern echo in the recently aired reality show, *Mystery in the Box*.

The show is based around a series of "boxes", each an independent world and stage for an improvised play. As celebrity guests enter one of the boxes, they must follow the rules of that specific world, taking on their assigned roles to overcome a series of challenges designed to test their wit, strength and creativity.

The narrative framework of each box explores societal themes such as familial bonds, digital existence and modern anxieties. Every episode ends with a short, experimen-

tal theater piece that reflects on its theme.

In the first episode, celebrities including actor Mark Zhao, actress Jin Jing, comedian Xu Zhisheng and members of pop group T.O.P entered a simulated town. There, children had to compete in games and tests to earn Existence Points, the virtual currency used in the town. The participants played either parent or child roles as they tried to earn points.

The episode concluded with a powerful 10-minute play by actor and director Wu Bi. His two-character drama was about a couple struggling with parenting pressures, and captured the frustrations and compromises many parents face.

As the theater consultant for the reality show, Wu is responsible for writing eight short plays during the

course of the season, each interpreting the themes explored in the episodes to provoke deeper audience reflection.

"Though each play lasts only about 10 minutes, we still work to make them well crafted and emotionally impactful," he says.

Wu has been active in film, television, and reality shows in recent years, but his true passion remains the stage.

His credits include classic productions like *Green Snake* and *Four Generations Under One Roof*, both produced by the National Theatre of China, as well as theater director Stan Lai's play *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*.

Wu's self-written play *Static*, which he also directed and performed in, won Best Drama at the 3rd Wuzhen Theater Festival's

Emerging Theatre Artists Competition in 2015, and he now serves as a judge for the competition.

By incorporating theatrical elements into reality shows, Wu hopes to attract more people to live theater.

"Stage productions typically run two to three hours, but we only have 10 minutes in the reality show — creating a complete narrative within this time frame presents greater scripting challenges," he explains.

"Additionally, theater offers a holistic experience for audiences, whereas performing for reality show requires actors to pay extra attention to filming details like hand gestures and subtle eye expressions."

Wu's path to theater wasn't exactly planned. Growing up, he first trained to sing. After he won a sing-

ing competition as a child, his parents took him to Beijing for the award ceremony.

There, his mother struck up a conversation with someone who remarked that her son looked like he'd be good at performing.

Performing — or *xi* in Chinese — can refer to either modern theater or traditional opera — but Wu's mother took it as meaning the latter.

"Next thing I knew, she'd signed me up for Peking Opera classes as soon as we got home," he recalls with a laugh.

And so he began grueling training in one of the most demanding Chinese performance arts, although he credits that training to this day.

"That discipline still nourishes me," Wu says. "The ability to maintain razor-



Actor Wu Bi stages a short play on the reality show *Mystery in the Box*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

sharp focus onstage, to calibrate every movement with precision, to communicate effortlessly with an audience — all these come from those arduous days of Peking Opera drills."