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# CHINA DAILY

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## Beijing rejects intimidation, open to talks

Abuse of pressure, threats, extortion not the way to engage, says spokeswoman

By WANG KEJU and YANG RAN in Beijing and BELINDA ROBINSON in New York

China has urged the United States to cancel its unilateral tariffs as quickly as possible, and get back on track to properly address differences through equal dialogue.

If the US stubbornly pursues its course of a trade war, China will "fight till the end" to defend its legitimate rights and interests, Chinese officials said on Thursday.

They didn't specify whether Beijing will again raise tariffs on US goods, which now stand at an additional 84 percent, in response to the latest decision by US on Wednesday to hike additional tariffs on Chinese imports to 125 percent.

The China Film Administration said on Thursday evening that the country — the world's second-largest film market — will moderately reduce the imports of US films.

"The US government's abuse of tariffs against China will lead to a further decline in the favorable perception of US films among the Chinese," the administration said. "We will adhere to the law of the market and respect the choices of the audience, and moderately reduce the number of US films imported."

He Yongqian, spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce, said at a news conference on Thursday, "Our position is consistent and clear — the door to dialogue is

open, but any discussions must be conducted on the basis of mutual respect and equality."

However, she stressed the abuse of pressure, threats and extortion is not the way to engage with China.

"We hope that the two countries will meet each other halfway and work toward resolving differences through dialogue and consultation, guided by the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," she added.

She noted that the current bonded policies in the special supervision areas of China's free trade zones will still be applicable for US goods, specifying that taxes will still need to be duly paid once the US goods depart the designated areas and enter the Chinese market for sales.

However, she stressed that if the US stubbornly pursues its course of a trade war, China will "fight till the end" to defend its legitimate rights and interests. The abuse of pressure, threats and extortion is not the way to engage with China, she added.

US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he was pausing his new tariffs for 90 days except on China.

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A customer shops at a Walmart store on Wednesday in San Leandro, the US state of California. Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, pulled back the first-quarter operating profit guidance on Wednesday, citing tariff risks. JUSTIN SULLIVAN / GETTY IMAGES

## Washington risks isolation from global community

The sooner United States President Donald Trump accepts the truth, the better. Unfortunately, he remains convinced that tariffs are an ideal way to "make America rich again".

By now, he has to know that the evidence tells a much different story. For however long this global trade war continues, inflation will go up. Unemployment numbers will go up. Prices paid by consumers will go up. Business productivity will go down. Economic confidence will go down. The stock market will go down. Yet the president insists that there is nothing to worry about because "I see a beautiful picture at the end".

Except for a few people within the administration, no one else in Washington believes that. On Wednesday, Trump said he was "raising the tariff charged to China by the US to 125 percent, effective immediately" as Beijing has not backed down on its promise to hit back.

The US seems to be forgetting that

### WORLD WATCH

By Anthony Moretti

China has already made it clear that it will not be bullied by the bully.

After a slew of tariffs was announced by the US on April 2, the Chinese foreign ministry spoke for the global community when it said, "This practice (of excessive tariffs) of the US is not in line with international trade rules, undermines China's legitimate rights and interests, and is a typical unilateral bullying practice."

The community of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations would agree, and it is well aware that its economies are especially vulnerable to the continuing trade war. From Vietnam and Malaysia to Indonesia and the Philippines, the need for a measured response to US tariff moves remains paramount.

The leaders of some ASEAN

## Welcome to the future



A robot developed by a Chinese tech company greets a visitor on Wednesday at the China Pavilion during a media day event ahead of the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka, Japan. The expo, themed "Designing Future Society for Our Lives", is scheduled to kick off on Sunday and run for six months through Oct 13. The China Pavilion, covering an area of around 3,500 square meters, stands as one of the largest foreign self-built pavilions at the expo. THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN VIA AP IMAGES

## Outlook on US travel, education exchanges gloomy

By CHENG SI chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

Industry insiders and experts hold a gloomy view of tourism and education exchanges between China and the United States, after two of China's ministries issued risk alerts noting the deterioration in bilateral economic relations caused by the US' hefty tariffs.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Education issued separate alerts on Wednesday evening.

The former reminded Chinese tourists to fully assess tourism risks in the US, in light of the worsening trade relations between the two sides and the US' domestic security situation. The Ministry of Education warned Chinese students to make security assessments if choosing to study in certain US states, citing a bill passed in the US state of Ohio that contains negative provisions related to China. It imposes restrictions on education exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and US higher education institutions, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Some tourism and education

experts expressed concerns about future China-US cooperation and development in the two sectors amid the escalating tariffs and public anxiety.

"There is a high possibility that the number of Chinese travelers heading to the US will decrease and China's outbound tourism to the US will hit a new low," said Zhang Jinshan, a researcher of tourism planning and development at Beijing Union University.

Zhang said that although China's outbound tourism to the US continues to recover after the COVID-19 pandemic, the current market volume is still below pre-pandemic levels.

According to Germany-based data platform Statista, the number of visitors from China to the US was about 1.6 million in 2024, increasing from 1.1 million the previous year. Figures from the website show that the number of Chinese visitors to the US fluctuated between 2011 and 2019, while dropping sharply from 2.8 million in 2019 to 378,000 in 2020 amid COVID-19.

"The number of travelers is affected by many elements, such as flight ticket prices and state-to-

state relations. Currently, those having rigid travel demands to the US may not change their plans, like for family visits or international students, while people going for leisure or tourism purposes will consider more cautiously before making their decision," said Wei Changren, founder of btii.com, a tourism-related financial news website, who is bearish on short-term tourism prospects between the two countries.

Concerns also came from the education sector, which has faced unilateral US visa restrictions and unfair treatment in recent years.

Chen Zhiwen, a member of the Chinese Society of Educational Development Strategy, said: "Chinese students have faced a deteriorating environment for getting an education in the US due to its containment against China in trade, technology and talent cultivation. The number of Chinese students going to the US for education has decreased by 100,000 in the past four years. Chinese parents will choose other countries as destinations for their children's overseas studies if the scenario continues to worsen."

He reminded Chinese parents and students to be more careful when considering getting an education in the US.

Data from the "Open Doors 2024 Report on International Educational Exchange", produced in part by the US State Department, and which was released in November, showed that 277,398 students from the Chinese mainland went to the US during the 2023-24 academic year. The number has dropped annually since peaking at more than 370,000 in the 2019-20 academic year.

Speaking of the ministries' warnings, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said the extreme pressure that the US has unilaterally applied on China, and the bullying and hegemonic actions by the US, have severely deteriorated the social foundation and public opinion environment between the two countries, seriously disrupting bilateral exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

Lin said China will continue to take resolute and strong measures to safeguard the nation's legitimate rights and interests.

Zhao Yimeng contributed to this story.

## COMMERCIAL FLYING CARS GET READY FOR LIFTOFF

Purchasing advanced vehicles a step closer, 'low-altitude economy' set for boost

By LI FUSHENG lifusheng@chinadaily.com.cn

### In-depth

The dream of owning a flying car, however wild it may sound, is poised to soon become a reality with a Chinese automaker one of the first in the world to start commercial production.

In late March, XPeng Motors Chairman He Xiaopeng told the China EV100 Forum in Beijing that the new energy vehicle start-up's subsidiary Xpeng AeroHT will start mass production of a hybrid flying car in 2026.

XPeng AeroHT's model, billed as the "Land Aircraft Carrier", consists of a ground vehicle and a flying module.

With six propellers, the electric flying module has a short flight range of up to 30 kilometers. It can be folded and stored in the ground

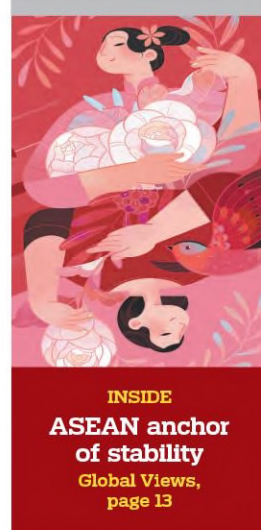
vehicle's trunk in five minutes. He said it is the first storable module of its kind.

A plant to build the vehicle is under construction in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, with a planned annual production capacity of 10,000 units, he said.

On April 1, the company announced that it had secured loans of up to 1.26 billion yuan (\$170 million) from a group of five Chinese banks for the construction, which is expected to be completed later this year.

The vehicle will be priced under 2 million yuan and deliveries will start next year, He said.

See Flying cars, page 2



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## PAGE TWO

Onlookers watch a demonstration of the flying module component of XPeng AeroHT's Land Aircraft Carrier in Haikou, Hainan province, on Jan 21.  
SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



# Flying cars: Redefining future of transport



From page 1

It was the third time in a month that He had mentioned publicly the upcoming arrival of the model at a high-profile event. But his repetition is understandable as the vehicle stands to revolutionize personal mobility and is an early attempt to tap into a potential trillion-dollar market.

He predicts that in the next 10 to 20 years, global flying-car sales could reach 20 percent of the automobile industry's yearly total revenue — an estimated \$2 trillion.

The potentially huge market explains XPeng's long-term investment in the sector. This year alone, XPeng AeroHT's budget is set at 3 billion yuan. Over the past decade, the company has raised over 10 billion yuan to invest in flying cars which are commonly known as eVTOLs (electric vertical takeoff and landing vehicle).

Entry into the sector is costly. According to a research report from the Lufthansa Innovation Hub, it costs eVTOL startups \$700 million to \$1 billion to progress from product development to airworthiness certification, to commercialization.

XPeng AeroHT's investment is expected to start paying off soon. Its Land Aircraft Carrier has already received nearly 5,000 orders, the company said.

"This flying car can be used for both sightseeing and rescue purposes," said Zhao Deli, president of XPeng AeroHT.

Besides this split-body model, the company is working on a one-piece flying car for long-distance flights of up to 500 km. "If you drive from Guangzhou in Guangdong province to Changsha in Hunan province, it will take six or seven hours. The flying car will take you there in one hour or so," He said.

## Domestic support

The rise of the low-altitude economy in China, which includes flying cars, has been elevated by domestic technological breakthroughs and policy support.

Battery manufacturing giants such as CATL are developing high-density batteries for both electric vehicles as well as robots and flying cars.

EVE, a battery maker headquartered in Guangdong, has been selected by XPeng AeroHT to provide low-voltage batteries for its projects. The company has also been offering batteries to parent company XPeng for its electric vehicles.

Huawei's AI-powered air-traffic management system, running on Ascend AI chips, can process millions of flight paths per second and has undergone city-scale simulation tests in Shenzhen, Guangdong.

Meanwhile, materials supplier Zhongfu Shenyang has slashed the production cost of T1100-grade carbon fiber, making lightweight flying car frames more economically viable.

XPeng's He said a flying car may use up to 300 kilograms of carbon fiber compound materials. "When we start production in 2026, our plant will be the one that consumes the most carbon fiber in the auto sector," he said.

China's strategic elevation of the low-altitude economy to national priority status — included in the 2024 Government Work Report for the first time — has injected momentum into the sector.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China has forecast the sector will grow to 3.5 trillion yuan by 2035.

The financial prospects have attracted many players. In December 2024, Chinese automaker GAC Group unveiled its new fly-

ing car brand, GOVY, and plans to establish production lines this year.

In the same month, car manufacturer Changan announced a strategic cooperation agreement with EHang Holdings Limited to advance flying car development, manufacturing, sales, and operations, with their joint investment to reach 20 billion yuan in five years.

EHang, headquartered in Guangdong, is a global leader in the urban air mobility segment. Changan said it expects to finish its first flying-car test flight late this year.

In February, China's first privately funded aero-engine test facility began construction in Sichuan province.

Slated for completion by 2027, the 2.25 billion yuan facility, will provide critical research and development support for next-generation aircraft, including drones, flying cars, and low-altitude vehicles.

## Two camps

The global flying car industry is divided into two competing camps, each shaped by distinct industrial paradigms.

Companies like XPeng represent the "automotive approach", extending ground transportation expertise into the skies.

XPeng's Land Aircraft Carrier features a range-extending hybrid ground module and a fully electric flying module, which can also autonomously return to a charging station after separation.

This design addresses both parking and charging issues. However, it must overcome two certification hurdles: the flying module must meet aviation standards, while the ground module must comply with motor vehicle regulations.

Aviation-focused firms like Joby Aviation and EHang are dedicated to developing only flying vehicles.

In late March, EHang's EH216-S autonomous air vehicle won an operation certificate from the Civil Aviation Administration of China, focusing on sightseeing and medical transport.

While the prospects for flying cars are promising, they must also overcome sig-



XPeng's Land Aircraft Carrier in Haikou.  
SUN SHIJIIE / FOR CHINA DAILY



The low-altitude economy is also driven by planes such as the light sport aircraft CTLS. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

nificant commercialization hurdles.

XPeng's Land Aircraft Carrier is priced below 2 million yuan, making it cheaper than helicopters, but still far from mass-market affordability.

For flying cars to reach Uber's target of "\$0.55 per seat-mile", annual production must reach the scale of 100,000 units — the same threshold Tesla electric vehicles crossed to achieve profitability.

To accelerate affordability, major industry players are exploring alternative business models.

Subscription-based services, similar to aircraft leasing models, may allow businesses and individuals to access flying cars without full ownership.

Companies like Volocopter and Archer Avi-

ation are already partnering with ride-hailing services to test per-trip pricing models, which could reduce upfront costs for users.

Regulatory delays present another major obstacle, as there is no global standard for flying car certification.

The US Federal Aviation Administration classifies eVTOLs as "special category aircraft", with Joby Aviation taking four years to obtain approval; the European Aviation Safety Agency mandates compliance with both aircraft and automobile standards, increasing Lilium Jet's certification costs by 40 percent.

## 'Invisible' roads

Air traffic control is another key challenge. While autonomous driving systems rely on sensors such as radar, cameras and AI perception, flying cars require dedicated low-altitude airspace coordination.

Chinese scientists are already working on the issue, by establishing "invisible roads" in the airspace below 3,000 meters to ensure orderly flight, Xinhua reported.

Qu Tengpeng, a researcher at Peking University's College of Engineering, and her team have developed a geospatial grid system to map low-altitude airspace.

The system converts three-dimensional spatial coordinates into binary codes, which create a real-time grid of airways. These invisible roads would help prevent collisions between low-altitude aircraft, and also let flying vehicles avoid buildings.

"With this air road network, we can design traffic rules and add 'traffic lights' to avoid accidents," Qu said.

To enhance air safety further, Li Zhongkui, a professor at the same college, developed an unmanned aircraft vehicle trajectory planning system.

Inspired by how birds in flocks coordinate with one another to avoid collisions, the system uses swarm intelligence to regulate the movement of low-altitude vehicles both online and in real-time, ensuring they maintain safe distances and fly in harmony.

Experts are also working to prevent noise pollution associated with flying cars. A 2022

Deloitte survey found that 58 percent of respondents were concerned about noise.

Lyu Benshuai, an assistant professor at Peking University's College of Engineering, and his team developed a rapid prediction model for rotor noise.

The model helps predict how different blade shapes and configurations affect noise levels, allowing for more efficient noise-reduction designs.

"We can do quite a lot in aeroacoustic optimization. For example, rotors mounted at the rear of the fuselage are often much noisier than those at the front, while blades with suitable geometry and serration designs generate less noise," Lyu said.

The team is collaborating with Chinese tech companies like Huawei and Ecovacs to implement these noise-reducing innovations. "We hope to bring these scientific advances to market soon," Lyu added.

Public acceptance is another barrier. Sixty-one percent of the respondents to the Deloitte survey said they fear severe consequences from mid-air accidents.

To build trust, EHang has focused on "low-altitude tourism" in provinces including Anhui and Guangdong. Analysts at Soochow Securities said China's low-altitude tourism market is worth 6 billion yuan a year.

XPeng AeroHT demonstrated automated separation and docking technology in Shanghai's financial center Lujiazui late last year, while assuring the spectators about the ease of flying.

In late March, its flying car performed a trans-lake flight in Changde, Hunan province. Flying to a height of 40 meters, it landed at the original location safely after circling over Liuye Lake, a scenic spot in the city.

## Aerial route

Earlier this year, XPeng AeroHT joined forces with Hainan to introduce the "aerial round-the-island scenic highway" in the tropical province.

The nearly 1,000-km aerial route, the first of its kind, will feature 42 observation decks, 24 parking spots and 40 stations, offering immersive flying car journeys, enabling "flying while playing, and flying across the entire island".

The venture also aims to complete over 20 flying car campsites from 2026 to 2027, achieving full coverage of scenic spots along the route.

Hainan's tropical island appeal and abundant natural resources are prime drivers for low-altitude economic development, said Jiang Hong, deputy director of the Hainan Provincial Development and Reform Commission.

Qiu Mingquan, vice-president of XPeng AeroHT, said that flying car excursions are poised to redefine self-driving tours and become a distinctive feature of tourism in Hainan.

The flying car sector will progress through three different stages, said Zhang Yangjun, a professor at the School of Vehicle and Mobility at Tsinghua University.

The first is expected to start this year, with cargo eVTOLs being commercially deployed and passenger eVTOLs beginning demonstration applications in specific scenarios.

In 10 years, both cargo and passenger eVTOLs will become the primary transportation vehicles for low-altitude travel, revolutionizing urban and regional mobility.

The third stage, around 2050, is expected to see flying cars reach mass-market maturity, said Zhang.



GAC Group's flying car GOVY on display during the 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, in November. CHEN CHUOHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## TOP NEWS

## Policies in pipeline to boost growth

Package may include interest rate cuts, additional govt spending, experts say

By ZHOU LANXU  
and OUYANG SHIJIA

China may soon launch a comprehensive set of additional macroeconomic measures to cushion a potentially substantial demand shock due to the United States' tariff hikes, reiterating its commitment to the preset annual economic growth target, said economists and advisers who are close to policymakers.

The package, they said, is likely to include additional central government spending of at least 1 trillion yuan (\$136.1 billion), cuts in interest rates and the reserve requirement ratio, and stronger subsidies for childcare, services consumption and affected businesses.

Recent remarks by Premier Li Qiang indicate that relevant actions would be both imminent and well-considered, they said, adding that the actions will be based on the country's past experience in dealing with trade tensions with the US and leveraging the advantage of the Communist Party of China's leadership, which enables coordinated and swift moves in crisis moments.

Guo Kai, executive president of the CF40 Institute, a research center affiliated with think tank China Finance 40 Forum, said, "China is able to and should announce a comprehensive package of macroeconomic buffers as soon as possible in a one-off manner to anchor expectations, before gradually delivering them and adjusting the accurate policy intensity based on the actual situation."

To buffer the potential loss caused by the US' "reciprocal tariffs", which have pushed US tariffs on Chinese imports to 125 percent, as announced by US President Donald Trump, Guo said it is sensible to launch additional fiscal deficit or central government bonds of more than 1 trillion yuan, the majority of which should be spent on bolstering consumption and improving people's incomes.

Guo added that now should be the right time to take bolder steps to cut interest rates, reducing interest payment pressure on businesses and households while supporting asset prices.

Premier Li has emphasized that China will introduce new incremental policies in a timely manner in light of the needs of the situation, responding to uncertainties in the external environment with strong and effective policies.

Speaking on Wednesday at a symposium with economic experts and entrepreneurs, Li said that the first quarter of the year saw a continuation of positive economic

momentum, while acknowledging the pressure that the external shocks may have on China's economic operations.

Many analysts expect China's first-quarter economic growth — scheduled to be released next week — to reach 5.2 percent, compared with an around 5 percent annual GDP growth target.

However, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Thursday that the country's consumer price index, the main gauge of inflation, fell 0.1 percent year-on-year in March after a 0.7 percent drop in February, pointing to the more pressing task of stimulating domestic demand amid the substantial external demand gap likely to result from tariff shocks, they said.

"It is now an appropriate time to intensify investment in public services," said Zhang Bin, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, who was one of the speakers at Wednesday's symposium.

"Without expanding investment, it would be hard to overcome weak demand in the short term. The approach of boosting investment, however, will differ from the past and should focus more on public projects that enhance consumption and improve people's well-being," Zhang told China Daily.

Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said that China has ample room for proactive fiscal and monetary policy to stabilize the economy amid external volatility.

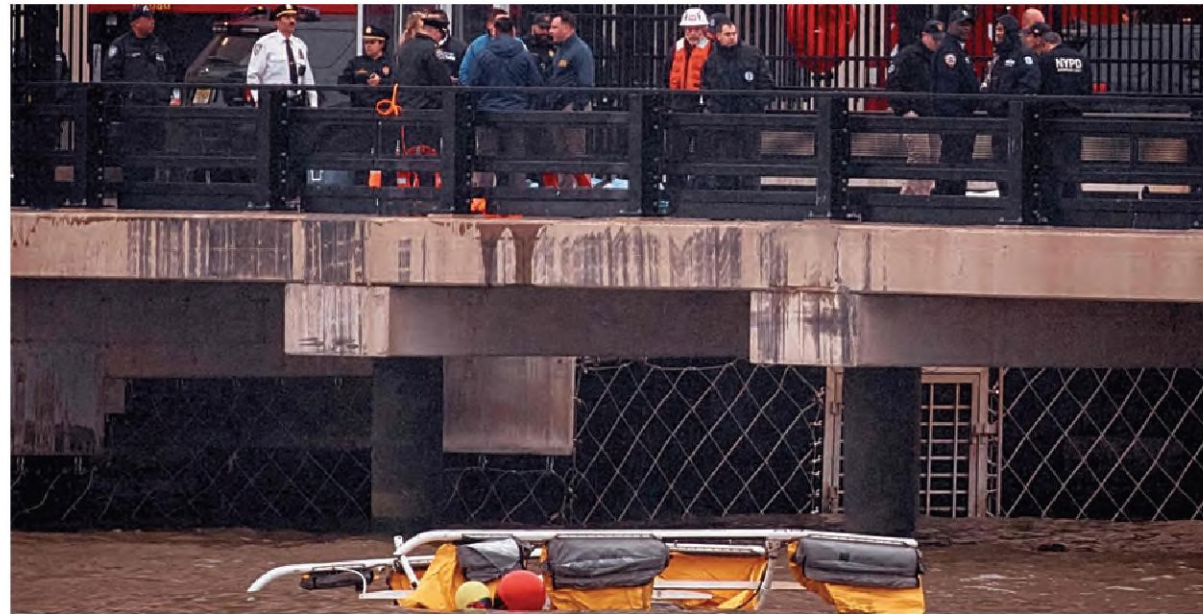
According to Sun, China's government debt stood at around 61 percent of GDP by the end of 2024, leaving sufficient room for China to expand the fiscal deficit and issue more special treasury bonds to boost domestic demand.

Expectations of economic resilience have shored up Chinese financial markets. The A-share market rallied for the third consecutive session as the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index went up 1.16 percent to Thursday's close at 3,223.64 points.

"Despite the tariff shock, many institutions haven't lowered their growth forecasts for China's economy. One reason is the certainty in the country's policies and economic growth targets — People have faith that the government will work hard to achieve its goals, a stark contrast to the situation in the US," said Guo at the CF40 Institute.

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## 6 die in helicopter crash



Police and firefighters work on the scene after a sightseeing helicopter crashed in the Hudson River on Thursday in Jersey City, New Jersey, across from Manhattan. Six people, five members of a family from Spain, three of them children, and the pilot died. ANDRES KUDACKI / GETTY IMAGES / AP

## Collaborations urged amid turbulence

By SONG PING  
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For Vuk Jeremic, former president of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly and former Serbian foreign minister, the storm is no longer distant — the world is in the midst of geopolitical turbulence, and while the roof is leaking, the time for structural reforms has passed — at least for now.

"You gotta wait for the rain to stop in order to fix the roof," he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily, adding that Europe had been under anesthesia for decades. "Europe should have woken up many, many years ago. Sadly, it hasn't," he said, referring to Europe-US relations.

He said the awakening did not come through self-reflection but through external events, beginning with United States President Donald Trump's shake-up of the foundational links of the transatlantic alliance, followed by the evolving Ukraine conflict, where the US has left its European allies watching from the sidelines. Jeremic said he believes this might set off a chaotic search for relevance and strategic direction.

Yet the problem is not only political. Beneath the surface lie deeper structural issues, such as economic stagnation, demographic imbalance, migration pressures, and most crucially, a growing technological gap, he said. In a world increasingly driven by artificial intelligence, green innovation, and digital infrastructure, Jeremic warned that Europe risks falling irreversibly behind. Global leadership in these areas is no longer confined to its traditional Western allies, as China is emerging as a key player.

If Europe is to maintain global competitiveness, Jeremic argued, it must engage, not retreat, which requires a fundamental recalibration of strategic relationships. "Europe needs to rethink its relationship with the United States," he said. "And it must seriously consider how it engages with China." In his view, cooperation with China is not only pragmatic but essential, particularly in key areas such as green transition.

"I can hardly see zero emissions by 2050 happening without real engagement with China," he said, pointing to China's leadership in electric vehicles, battery production,



Vuk Jeremic

and high-speed rail. He sees Europe's current trajectory — shaped by past transatlantic politics and its economic disengagement from China — as short-sighted and in need of reassessment. "You can turn your head and say, 'I don't want to cooperate with China on high-speed rail,'" he said. "But then, who are you going to work with? At what cost? And will it be as good as what the Chinese can deliver? Probably not."

Jeremic expressed concerns over Europe's growing security anxiety and the rapid increase in defense spending. While acknowledging that such a choice is legitimate, he warned that it would come at a high cost, especially for Europe, since it, unlike the US, cannot print money infinitely. "If they decide to spend it on defense, then I fear that it becomes a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy," he continued. "If two sides are hyper busy beefing up their defense and preparing for war, producing arms and so on, then eventually the likelihood of them getting into a conflict ... is much higher."

Meanwhile, the international system built to mediate such tensions is faltering. Calls for reform of global governance have been persistent, but largely rhetorical. "Reform happens when times are good, when cooperation is thriving," Jeremic said. "And now it's raining, and raining quite badly," he said, using a metaphor. In his view, meaningful renovation of institutions like the United Nations or the Bretton Woods system cannot happen amid geopolitical storm clouds. What is possible, perhaps, is to patch up what can be patched up, that is, to prevent collapse until clearer skies return. But systemic overhaul will have to wait.

What worries Jeremic more is the direction in which global politics may evolve in the meantime. He foresees a complex, overlapping picture: limited institutional reforms on one hand; growing reliance on alternative platforms such as BRICS, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the European Union on the other; and a disturbing rise in unilateralism as states

grow frustrated with multilateral paralysis. He called this a "geopolitical recession", and warned that it could deepen unless strategic thinking is restored.

As a Serbian, Jeremic speaks from both personal and national experience. Reflecting on the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, he called it "one of the most dramatic mistakes of the US administration". It was, in his eyes, a violation of sovereignty, especially considering Kosovo's deep ties to Serbia's national identity. Citing the US-led war in Iraq, he said he believes this reflects a broader trend in which successive US governments missed crucial moments to reform global governance, while choosing coercion over cooperation. Now, with little appetite for reform in Washington, he said the world must navigate its way through the storm without illusions.

Jeremic said he believes that turbulence can lead to transformation, not fatalism — if Europe is willing to adapt. That means embracing global cooperation, recognizing that multipolarity is not a threat but a reality, and understanding that countries like China are not peripheral actors but central partners in addressing shared challenges. "The next few years will be years of transformations," he said. "I hope that out of those transformations, we're going to see a different Europe — one that is more open to global cooperation with everyone, starting with and including China."

Having visited China nearly 50 times during the past two decades, Jeremic spoke with recognition of the country's fast and stable development. He called it "perhaps the most dramatically successful experiment in the history of human development", citing both the speed and scale of China's transformation. From lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty to leading in technological innovation, he sees China as a critical player in the global future.

He noted that Serbia was the first European country to join China in building a community with a shared future in the new era, describing it as a logical extension of decades of strategic partnership. He said he believes such a framework would grow in importance as the world becomes increasingly interconnected and dependent on shared solutions.

## Tariffs: Actions could erase all of US' credibility

From page 1

Any pronouncement from the administration about global security might be mocked. And US citizens visiting other countries should anticipate hostile reactions from people whose livelihoods are under threat.

An obvious question remains unanswered: What is the thinking behind these moves? What motivates the US administration to have such disdain for international norms?

In effect, the more the current administration pays attention to the mainstream media and social media platforms that back it, the more it will hear that the goal to "make America great again" is a kind of moral crusade. As a result, kicked to the curb will be people who dare to question whether this is the right thing or whether it will succeed.

The mythical fork in the road was reached and the US made its choice. Tariffs are not going anywhere. The short-term damage at home and abroad is starting to become evident. The longer-term ramifications await, and there is a very real chance that they will erase whatever credibility the US still has on the global stage.

Rebuilding whatever it is that is being destroyed will take years to complete, presuming of course they choose to undertake such obligations. By then, the world might have confirmed that its reliable and committed economic partner is China.

The author is an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Levies: China, EU talk of more cooperation

From page 1

Trump said on social media that he had "authorized a 90-day PAUSE, and a substantially lowered Reciprocal Tariff during this period, of 10 percent, also effective immediately".

He did not specify which countries the pause would apply to, but was clear the levies would climb for China.

Gary Winslett, an assistant political science professor at Middlebury College in Vermont said: "The 90-day pause is a step in the right direction, but the trade war with China is still bad, the universal 10 percent tariff is even worse, the on-again-off-again approach is bad for investment and jobs and we undermined geopolitical leadership with nothing to show."

Analysts noted that the Trump administration's 10 percent base tariff is still in place, suggesting that

more rounds of tariff negotiations are ahead. The White House said that over 70 countries had come forward to negotiate tariffs this week.

Luo Zhenxing, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of American Studies, said that US' selective approach to different countries allows Washington to maintain its image, as removing tariffs across the board could be seen as a setback.

Such moves have severely disrupted the global trade system. Regardless of future policy directions, global trade principles have been significantly undermined, potentially leading to a restructuring of global trade and global financial systems, Luo said.

Lin Jian, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said on Thursday China will never allow the international economic and trade rules and the multilateral

trading system to be undermined.

The US is placing its own interests above the legitimate interests of the rest of the world, sacrificing the just interests of all countries to serve its hegemonic ambitions. This will inevitably face stronger opposition from the international community, Lin said.

China and the European Union have recently exchanged views on strengthening economic and trade cooperation in response to US tariffs.

The latest move came as Commerce Minister Wang Wentao held a video call on Tuesday with European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic, during which they discussed various issues, including enhancing China-EU economic and trade cooperation and responses to the US imposition of so-called "reciprocal tariffs", according to a statement released by

the Commerce Ministry on Thursday.

Wang said under current circumstances, China and the EU upholding the rules-based multilateral trading system and staying committed to trade liberalization will "inject more stability and certainty into the global economic and trade landscape".

The two sides agreed to immediately start negotiations on electric vehicle pricing, and resume the China-EU trade remedy dialogue mechanism.

The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said on Thursday that China has the chance to establish a business environment that can provide the stability and reliability that investors require.

On the contrary, the US is now rolling back on many of the principles that have underpinned its approach to global trade and investment, which has created unprecedented global economic uncertainty, the chamber said.

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## CHINA

## Zhuhai to enhance oversight of apps for education

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
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The education bureau of Zhuhai, a city in Guangdong province's Pearl River Delta, has introduced policy measures to strengthen oversight of educational apps in schools, allowing only standardized ones for use.

This month, the bureau published "Ten Measures to Further Strengthen the Management of Educational Apps in Schools" on its official website. The guidelines require all schools, as well as teaching and research institutions in the city, to follow a strict selection and review process before adopting any educational apps.

Schools are prohibited from charging students or parents for the apps or recommending them arbitrarily, according to the document. In selecting apps, institutions must consider at least three alternatives of the same type. Additionally, app usage cannot be linked to students' credits, grades or evaluations.

The measures aim to ensure that educational apps function solely as tools to support learning, rather than disrupt it, the bureau said. While the digital transformation of education is irreversible, standardizing apps will foster long-term development and create a healthier learning environment for students, it added.

Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, said education authorities should release a whitelist specifying which apps teachers, students and parents are permitted to use.

"Educational apps in schools should be used for public welfare, and parents and students should not be charged," he said. He also emphasized that app content must meet legal and educational standards, with pornographic and illegal material strictly prohibited.

Zhuhai's measures come amid the rapid expansion of education technology, with apps increasingly integrated into school operations.

"From teaching management to homework, from home-school communication to student evaluation, educational apps have almost become standard tools in schools," the bureau said.

However, this widespread adoption has also led to problems such as mandatory use, unauthorized fees, data breaches and excessive entertainment features, creating additional burdens for teachers, students and parents, according to the bureau.

In 2019, eight government departments, including the Ministry of Education, issued the "Opinions on Guiding and Regulating the Orderly and Healthy Development of Educational Mobile Internet Applications", the first nationwide policy to standardize educational apps. It set requirements for app approval, regulatory oversight and industry supervision.

At the local level, cities such as Beijing and Dongguan in Guangdong province have also introduced regulations in recent years to better manage the sector.

Xue Yixue, an office worker in Guangzhou's Tianhe district and the mother of a high school student, said she strongly supports the new measures.

"Standardized apps help students learn, while irregular ones could negatively affect them," she said.

Another Guangzhou parent, who requested anonymity, also backed the regulations, saying, "It's necessary to standardize educational apps so they can play a greater role in school teaching."

Li Qiaoshun contributed to this story.

## Empowering youth



A student's drum performance captivates a large crowd at Zhaoming Primary School in Xiangyang, Hubei province, on Wednesday. To enhance aesthetic education and foster the all-round development of students, the school offers stages for students to display their talents during afternoon breaks from Tuesday to Friday, encouraging the growth of self-confidence and creativity among them. YANG DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Exploration unearths critical mineral deposits

Newly discovered ore expected to reduce the country's heavy reliance on imports

By XU NUO  
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China's Ministry of Natural Resources recently identified high-purity quartz as the country's 174th mineral type, as multiple ore deposits have been discovered in the country, the ministry announced on Thursday. These discoveries are expected to reduce the country's heavy reliance on imports.

This newly recognized mineral ore can achieve a silicon dioxide purity of at least 99.995 percent after processing and purification. The impurity levels, inclusion content and particle size are suitable for high-tech applications such as semiconductors and photovoltaics.

"High-purity quartz is notable for its resistance to heat and corrosion, low thermal expansion, excellent insulation and light transmission properties. It is a foundational material for strategic emerging industries like semiconductors and photovoltaics, and plays a crucial role in enhancing national high-tech competitiveness," said a spokesperson from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

China is a major consumer of high-purity quartz sand and the world's largest importer of the material. In recent years, China's imports of high-purity quartz have accounted

for approximately 70 percent of the global total. As the country relies heavily on imports from foreign markets such as the United States and Norway, it makes market stability susceptible to trade policies and therefore introduces significant uncertainty.

As part of a new strategic mineral exploration initiative, China has discovered several high-purity quartz deposits in regions such as East Qinling Mountains in Henan province and Altay in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Meanwhile, Chinese enterprises and research institutions have made significant advancements in mineral assessment, resource exploration, deep purification and targeted impurity removal, marking a critical step toward the industrialization of high-purity quartz sand production using domestic resources.

Mao Jingwen, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, told China Central Television, that "high-purity quartz is a scarce mineral, and China has been heavily reliant on imports. The establishment of this new mineral type will facilitate the high-quality development of related emerging industries and enhance the resilience and security of industrial and supply chains."

"Future efforts will prioritize the-

oretical research in mineralization, as well as exploration and assessment technologies and separation and purification techniques. Emphasis will also be placed on surveying and evaluating resources, with key exploration projects designated to determine high-purity quartz resource reserves," Huang Xuexiong, director of the department of mineral resources protection and supervision at the Ministry of Natural Resources, was quoted as saying by CCTV.

In addition to high-purity quartz, the latest strategic mineral exploration efforts have significantly increased the national reserves of 12 minerals, including copper, gold, gallium, germanium and indium.

The exploration has also effectively alleviated resource shortages of bulk minerals such as copper, aluminum and iron, providing robust support for China to become a manufacturing powerhouse.

In Hainan province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, new zirconium resources totaling 85,000 metric tons and hafnium resources exceeding 1,000 tons have been identified, effectively ensuring the security of industrial and supply chains for China's emerging industries, such as new energy and new materials.

Regarding energy minerals, new discoveries continue to be made in the exploration of conventional oil, gas and uranium deposits, according to the ministry.



## Airport expanded

Passengers take photos to mark the official opening of Terminal 3B (T3B) at Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport on Wednesday. The terminal has a total area of 363,000 square meters and is connected to T3A by a rapid transit passenger system.

LONG FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

## Officials punished over department store fire

In connection with a department store fire in Zigong, Sichuan province, 19 individuals suspected of criminal activities have been placed under investigation and 32 public officials have been punished, the provincial discipline inspection and supervision commission announced on Wednesday. The fire occurred on July 17, 2024, in a 14-story building located in a high-tech zone of the city, leaving 16 people dead and 39 others injured. It resulted in direct economic losses of 26.7 million yuan (\$3.65 million), according to an

investigation report. The 19 individuals include legal representatives of the building management and those responsible for fire protection engineering design, construction and maintenance. They have been placed under investigation by the provincial public security department. A total of 32 public officials from various government bodies — including the departments of commerce and housing and urban-rural development — and fire and rescue agencies have received party and administrative disciplinary penalties, such as criticism and education, warnings, removal from office and demotion.

## Hydrogen drone flies for 30 hours nonstop

An independently developed Chinese hydrogen-powered drone recently completed a 30-hour non-stop flight, a record for such aircraft produced in the country, according to the Aviation Industry Corporation of China. The 50 kilogram-class hydrogen drone was jointly developed by AVIC Chengdu Aircraft Industrial (Group) Co and Tsinghua University, AVIC said. The aircraft completed the record flight in Dujiangyan, Sichuan province.

XINHUA

## Scientists uncover lunar water disparity

By YAN DONGJIE  
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Chinese scientists have discovered striking differences in water content between the moon's near and far sides through analysis of basalt samples from the Chang'e 6 mission.

The team's findings, published on Thursday in the journal *Nature*, reveal that the mantle source of Chang'e 6 mare basalts contains 1 to 1.5 micrograms per gram of water, indicating that the lunar far side mantle contains less than one-third the water of its nearside counterpart.

"This result may offer crucial insight into the moon's formation and thermochemical evolution," said Hu Sen, a researcher at the Institute of Geology and Geophysics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Over the past two decades, extensive studies of lunar samples from the nearside have demonstrated a highly heterogeneous distribution of water in the moon's interior, with concentrations ranging from approximately 1 to 200 mcg per gram.

Both thorium and water, considered as incompatible elements, are preferentially staying in melt phase rather than incorporating into minerals during the magmatic processes.

This geochemical behavior suggests that the mantle beneath the South Pole-Aitken Basin, on the lunar far side, may contain a lower abundance of water, Hu said.

In June, China's Chang'e 6 probe retrieved nearly 2 kilograms of soil from the SPA Basin — the largest impact crater in the solar system — marking humanity's first sample return from the moon's far side.

The team's results indicate that the parent magma of these basalts contains 15 to 168 mcg per gram of water. Additionally, the team estimated that the mantle source of the Chang'e 6 basalts has a water content of 1 to 1.5 mcg per gram, significantly lower than that of the nearside mantle.

"The first water estimate retrieved from the lunar far side indicates that water abundance in the lunar mantle may exhibit a hemispheric dichotomy, consistent with many asymmetrical features observed on the lunar surface," Hu said.

"This new estimate of the lunar far side mantle's water content marks a significant step forward in refining our understanding of the bulk silicate in the moon's water inventory. It provides important constraints on the giant-impact hypothesis of the moon and the subsequent evolution of the moon for which the role of water is central," Hu said.

Funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, this study is a landmark for estimating the water abundance of the bulk moon. Further investigations of Chang'e 6 materials are expected to shed more light on understanding the formation history of the Earth-moon system.



A simulated picture of the two dinosaurs walking, *Sinosauropteryx lingyuanensis* (right) and *Huadanosaurus sinensis* (left), found in Lingyuan, Liaoning province. ZHAO CHUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## New dinosaur species identified in Liaoning

By YAN DONGJIE  
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Chinese scientists have identified two new dinosaur species in Northeast China, shedding light on the evolution of small, feathered theropods and the remarkable diversity of the 125-million-year-old Jehol Biota.

The research, published in the *National Science Review*, details the discovery of *Sinosauropteryx lingyuanensis*, a new species, and *Huadanosaurus sinensis*, a new genus and species, both found in Lingyuan, Liaoning province.

A key finding of the study reveals the first direct evidence of dinosaur-mammal predation in this ancient ecosystem. The fossil of *Huadanosaurus sinensis* contained the remains of two mammals: a complete skeleton of a eutriconodont and fragments of a eutherian.

"*Huadanosaurus* had robust jaws and powerful neck muscles, suggesting it could swiftly kill prey through its strong biting force, enabling it to hunt mammals efficiently," said Qiu Rui, a lead author and associate researcher at the Natural History Museum of China.

This predatory behavior contrasts with other related dinosaurs. *Sinosauropteryx prima*, which was about 1 meter long, preyed on lizards, while the larger *Sinocalliopteryx gigas*, at 2.4 meters in length, consumed dromaeosaurs. This division of hunting strategies within a single dinosaur lineage is considered highly unusual.

The study also revises the clas-

sification of these feathered dinosaurs, reinstating *Sinosauropterygidae* as a distinct group. Previously, they were grouped under *Compsognathidae*, a classification now deemed inaccurate.

"Our analysis of 504 theropod species shows that Jehol's *Sinosauropterygids* form a unique branch at the base of Coelurosauria," said Wang Xiaolin, a researcher at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a corresponding author of the study.

The researchers connect the diversification of these dinosaurs to tectonic shifts that occurred 125 million years ago. The destruction of the North China Craton created isolated rift basins, intensifying competition among species.

"In most Mesozoic ecosystems, a single dinosaur lineage occupied one niche. But here in Liaoning, *Sinosauropterygids* evolved three hunting strategies, while distantly related groups like dromaeosaurs and tyrannosaurs overlapped in similar roles," said Zhou Zhonghe, a researcher at IVPP and a co-author of the study.

This "diversification within lineages" model explains the extraordinary diversity of the Jehol Biota, surpassing other known dinosaur ecosystems, researchers said.

The findings highlight the crucial role of China's fossil-rich regions in understanding evolutionary history. The research was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

# Shanxi pours effort into ecosystems

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Spring is a vibrant season in the North China province of Shanxi, where rivers and lakes are fuller with the thawing of ice and snow, trees along the banks begin to bloom and migrant birds return.

The scene is not just a natural process but the result of human efforts to protect the environment. In recent years, the province has rolled out a series of rules and regulations and implemented innovative practices to accelerate the protection of rivers and lakes.

With substantial improvements in water quality and the ecosystem, Shanxi, a province in the middle reaches of the Yellow River, is striding toward its goal of becoming an important experimental zone for ecological protection and high-quality development in the river's drainage region.

One innovative practice for protecting Shanxi's water environment and wetland ecosystem is the river chief system.

Shanxi began to implement the river chief system in 2017. A river chief is usually the chief of the local committee of the Communist Party of China and head of the government, responsible for a section of the local river. The system is also applicable for lakes and other water bodies throughout the province.

Shanxi's water bodies are now taken care of by more than 22,000 river and lake chiefs at the village, township, county, city and provincial levels. The river chiefs' tasks are ensuring the river's environment is protected and helping raise residents' awareness of environmental protection.

Zhang Ronghuai (1916-2005), the first secretary of the CPC committee of Youyu, is regarded by locals in this northern Shanxi county as one of the pioneering river chiefs in the province because of his contribution to curb the Cangtuo River, although he didn't get such a title in his lifetime.

A tributary of the Yellow River, the Cangtuo is deemed as the mother river of Youyu as it is the largest in the county and has nurtured life and development for thousands of years.

However, the river was not always beneficial in history. According to local residents, the Cangtuo was even regarded a harmful river some seven decades ago. In rainy seasons, it flooded farmlands, destroyed properties and claimed lives. In dry seasons, its riverbeds were a source of sandstorms.

Zhang, who took the post as Youyu's Party chief in 1949, then recognized that severe soil erosion was the biggest reason that made the Cangtuo harmful. He then began to curb this through greening efforts.

In 1950, he and his colleagues ordered the planting of trees and grasses along the barren banks of the river. This greening program was later expanded to hills and mountains near the river and beyond, basically curbing soil erosion over the following decades.

The county's forest coverage rate has increased from less than 0.3 percent in the 1950s to 57 percent now, creating a marvel in human ecology. Youyu was honored with the New Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Award during the 19th Annual Sessions of the Global Forum on Human Settlements, and the New Sustainable Cities and the Human Settlements Awards Ceremony held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in October.

The Cangtuo River area has also developed into a provincial-level protection zone for wetlands and a major scenic belt. While offering habitat to hundreds of wildlife species, it has attracted millions of tourists to see how this once barren land transformed into an oasis.

The greening efforts have helped the Cangtuo make the list of China's rivers and lakes that generate a sense of happiness among locals, which was announced on March 22.

There are 60 sections of rivers and lakes in Shanxi included in the list. On the list, Salt Lake in the southern Shanxi city of Yun-



River chief system hailed as innovative way to protect and reinvigorate waterways across province

A Yellow River reservoir in Yuanqu county now features clean waters and mountains covered with lush vegetation. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Willow trees near a lake in Taiyuan's Yingze Park begin to sprout in early spring. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY More than 200 cranes are spotted on the Sanggan River wetland in Datong on Oct 25. WEI XIANGDONG AND LIU LIUYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Yuncheng Salt Lake becomes a patchwork quilt of colors in warm weather thanks to its algae. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

cheng is a shining example of environmental protection.

Covering an area of 132 square kilometers, Yuncheng Salt Lake is one of three famed inland lakes with sodium sulfate — a bitter salt used especially in detergents — in the world.

The lake served as a salt production base for about 4,600 years, according to local history documents. When production reached its peak decades ago, the local ecological environment was severely challenged, according to Diao Haipeng, vice-mayor of Yuncheng city.

"These environmental challenges includ-

ed pollution, damage to embankments, a decrease in vegetation along the lake and silting-up of watercourses," Diao said. "After millennia of prosperous growth, the lake needed to slow down its pace of development and have a respite."

To protect this gem, the government of Yuncheng ordered a halt to salt mining in 2020 and began an environmental improvement program in 2021.

The official said that the program included dredging the lake and its connected watercourses, enhancing 98 km of embankments and planting a vegetation belt along the lake.

The lake's water is supplied by streams originating from the neighboring Zhongtiao Mountains. The Zhongtiao area is another target of environmental improvement, according to Diao.

"The mineral-rich Zhongtiao streams are the lifelines for the lake," Diao said. "Through increasing vegetation coverage and economized use of water among residents and businesses, the streams' runoff into the lake has been increasing steadily over recent years."

The vice-mayor added that the streams' annual supply of saline minerals to the lake has now reached about 200,000 metric tons,

among the best levels in history.

After several years of efforts, Yuncheng Salt Lake has seen a steady improvement in its environment. The lake is now a better habitat for birds and other wildlife species. More than 200 bird species have been recorded in recent years, including such rare varieties as flamingo, swan, pied avocet and great bustard, according to local environmental officials.

The flamingo is an endangered species of stork mainly living in Africa, Central Asia and South Asia. Records show that the birds were first discovered in China in the late 1990s. Now the city of Yuncheng has become a favored winter habitat of the bird.

When salt production temporarily closed at the lake, Diao said how to guarantee revenue was a concern among residents, businesses and officials.

The official noted that production will resume when the improvement program is completed, but in a rational scale aiming to strike a balance between environmental protection and economic growth. He said additional revenues will come from tourism and industries derived from salt production.

One example is the development of products based on black mud from the lake bed. Black mud is a resource unique to Yuncheng Salt Lake. Containing fulvic acid and 38 varieties of minerals, the mud is used to make products for healthcare, skin care and crop care.

Yuncheng Salt Lake has become a tourist destination in Shanxi province, which has developed into a major stream of revenue.

The tourism industry highlights both the historical tradition of salt mining and innovative scenarios meeting the taste of modern-day tourists.

"On this lake, known as the Chinese version of the Dead Sea, floating on the water's surface is an unforgettable experience that you can never find elsewhere in the country," said a tourist on his WeChat account.

In recent years, the lake again became a hit on social media because of eye-catching aerial photos of its colorful surface. As temperatures begin to rise in early summer, the multicolored Salt Lake becomes a busy attraction for tourists and photographers.

Scientists attribute the rich colors of the lake to the propagation and growth of halophilic algae and brine shrimp. The organisms change color at various temperatures, turning the lake into a huge painter's palette.

Another lake on the nation's "happy rivers (lakes)" list is Yunzhu Lake in Yushe county, Jinzhong city. It is a large reservoir in the southwest of the county, which was created in the early 1960s.

Covering 1,416 hectares and boasting four wetland parks and more than 30 scenic attractions, Yunzhu Lake is one of the top tourist destinations in the county.

Liu Feng, a resident of Pianliang village in its vicinity, said it is fortunate to live by a picturesque lake.

Liu operates a bed-and-breakfast business in his village. Thanks to growing numbers of tourists, the business generated an annual net income of more than 100,000 yuan (\$13,630) for his family in recent years.

"Yunzhu was not a tourist destination at the beginning," Liu said. "It became one several years ago after the county government invested nearly 1 billion yuan in local environmental improvements and landscaping."

He said there are hundreds of people involved in the tourism industry after the lake and its vicinity became a destination.

Pianliang also invested 4.6 million yuan in improving local infrastructure, such as roads and water treatment facilities, laying a foundation for tourism development, according to a village official.

The official said the tourism industry has brought an additional per capita net income of more than 3,000 yuan for its residents annually.

Shen Qingfang and Li Keying contributed to this story.



Yunzhu Lake in Yushe county is an emerging tourist destination in Shanxi thanks to the government's effort in environmental protection. LI XIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## BUSINESS

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## Yonghui doing its part to help tariff-hit firms

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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In response to new rounds of United States' tariff hikes and ongoing global supply chain disruptions, Chinese retailer Yonghui Superstores launched a "green channel" initiative aimed at supporting domestic supply chain enterprises grappling with stockpiles caused by export challenges.

The initiative, unveiled on Monday, includes fast-track product placement within 15 days, targeted promotional support and collaborative product development to help manufacturers shift their focus to the domestic market.

The move comes as part of Yonghui's broader strategy to strengthen its supply chain partnerships and tap into China's high-quality manufacturing capabilities.

Yonghui said it serves a dual role as both a consumer-facing retail platform and a strategic partner to Chinese manufacturers.

Yonghui is currently in talks with over 70 supply chain enterprises, including those that supply products to Costco and Sam's Club of Walmart Inc in the US market.

The retailer focuses on deepening collaboration with core suppliers, prioritizing major product categories and pursuing long-term growth. As part of this effort, Yonghui aims to incubate 100 products, each generating over 100 million yuan (\$13.62 million) in annual sales within the next three years.

Among the first group of companies signing up for the new move is Jiangsu Huateng Personal Care Products Co Ltd, a dental hygiene supplier based in Jiangsu province.

Huateng has been a long-standing supplier for Walmart Inc, providing a range of dental products, including flossing items for the retailer's private brands. The company exports to the US, Europe and South America, with an annual revenue of 200 million yuan.

However, the company has recently encountered significant challenges as orders from the US have hit a wall due to the increasing tariffs imposed on Chinese products.

Mu Longsheng, the company's head, said, "A few weeks ago, we hoped to share some of the tariff burden just to keep the factories running and our workers employed."

Now, with the imposition of the

new tariffs, Mu said as a company in an industry with razor-thin margins, the impact would result in a tenfold decrease in profits.

Mu said that Chinese manufacturers like Huateng maintain a higher production capacity for dental care supplies compared to competitors in India and Türkiye.

China is a key supplier for retailers in the US.

During Walmart's investment community meeting on Wednesday, the company said more than two-thirds of what they sell in the US is made, grown, or assembled in the US.

John David Rainey, CFO of Walmart Inc, added, "The (remaining) third that we import comes from all over the world, but China and Mexico are the most significant."

However, to adapt to the shifting market dynamics, Huateng has pivoted toward collaborations with domestic retailers, such as Yonghui, to develop dental tools and products tailored for Chinese consumers. At the same time, the company is actively exploring other international markets to offset the losses.

Some of Mu's peers have relocated their factories to Southeast Asian countries to evade previous tariffs.

"Some of my friends are now worried about the uncertainties that come with such moves," he said. "This situation has reinforced our decision to keep our factories in China."

With government support, retailers have assisted exporters in expanding their domestic market shares. This initiative aims to help struggling enterprises reduce their inventories and stimulate consumption potential with high-quality products intended for export, said Jason Yu, general manager of CTR Market Research.

"By doing so, it uses certainty in the domestic market to address the uncertainties in the external environment," Yu said.

In addition to Yonghui, other domestic retailers are fostering supportive business environments. On April 3, e-commerce platform Pinduoduo announced a plan to invest in resources such as funding and online traffic over the next three years.

This initiative aims to enhance the e-commerce ecosystem, enable the transformation and upgrading of platform suppliers and merchants, and fully build a win-win business ecosystem for users, merchants and the platform.



Export-bound automobiles await shipment in Taicang, Jiangsu province. JI HAIXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## BRI auto demand elixir for protectionism

Chinese vehicle exports to US minimal, providing level of levy immunity

By LIU YUKUN  
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Chinese vehicles are relatively immune from the United States' tariff impacts due to the limited number of such direct exports to the US and nearly nonexistent market of domestic brands in that market, said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association.

Cui highlighted the strong growth potential of Chinese autos in other markets. He stressed the need for Chinese automakers to strengthen partnerships with companies from Belt and Road Initiative-involved regions and southern hemisphere areas.

Specifically, Cui said promoting the use of small-sized electric vehicles in those markets is key to addressing demand for navigating narrow streets due to inadequate infrastructure development in certain regions.

"Currently, China's efforts in advancing the BRI have been fruitful, and there is strong demand for automobiles in these regions. There is substantial potential for gasoline-

powered Chinese vehicles by ramping up the export of these products. Promoting plug-in hybrid models will also unlock tremendous opportunities due to cost-effectiveness and energy-efficiency," he said.

Cui, citing data from the General Administration of Customs, said China exported only 116,138 vehicles to the US in 2024, accounting for a mere 1.81 percent of China's total auto exports.

In contrast, the so-called reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US have a more significant impact on European, Japanese and South Korean automakers. Huatai Securities predicts that the 25 percent additional tariffs imposed by the US will affect 20 percent of direct exports from Japan and South Korea, and 30 percent of direct exports from German automakers, translating to an estimated sales impact of approximately 270,000, 200,000, and 160,000 vehicles, respectively, in 2025.

Huatai Securities suggests that the US tariff policies may indirectly promote cooperation between China and other countries and regions, potentially enabling Chinese auto-

motive companies to gain more market share in the EU and Southeast Asia.

As per the Ministry of Commerce, on April 3, both China and Europe agreed to swiftly resume negotiations on price commitments for electric vehicle anti-subsidy cases, fostering a favorable environment for promoting investment and industrial cooperation between Chinese and European enterprises.

"China's global automotive market share is only around 35 percent, with Chinese brand vehicles accounting for less than 28 percent. Chinese brand vehicles have ample room for market share growth in many overseas markets," Cui said.

"With minimal presence in the US automotive market, the trade conflicts have minimal negative impacts on Chinese brand vehicles. There are numerous opportunities for Chinese brands to expand overseas, especially in countries without established automotive industries that welcome our localized products," he said.

Cui highlighted a growing need for Chinese autos from BRI-involved regions. He said accelerating the export of Chinese gas-powered vehicle products and hybrid models holds immense potential.

## Guangdong to further support AI firms

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
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South China's Guangdong province will spare no effort to support artificial intelligence and robotics companies in achieving breakthroughs in technology industrialization, product marketing and service commercialization in the coming months, a senior official said.

The latest move aims to continuously provide high-quality and affordable products and services for local companies as well as households, accelerating the empowerment of thousands of industries with AI and deepening the application of "robot+" scenarios, said Qu Xiaojie, deputy director of the Guangdong Department of Industry and Information Technology.

"Meanwhile, Guangdong, a global innovation center, sincerely welcomes scientists, entrepreneurs and young talent from around the world in the fields of AI and robotics to invest and develop the AI and robotics industry in the province," he said.

Qu said that his department would ensure coordination of resources, cultivation of enterprises, industrial agglomeration, ecological optimization and promotion of exchanges to support innovation and development by enterprises in the AI and robotics industry in the province, which is also a major production

base in the world.

Qu made the remarks at a news conference in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, on Wednesday.

Qu said Guangdong has potential to develop the AI and robotics industry, as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area combines the advantages of electromechanical and digital intelligence technology, with a complete AI and robotics industry chain, complete support facilities, fast response, high quality, good service and excellent ecology.

The province, an economic powerhouse of the country, has become a mecca for global talent, technology and capital, he said.

Guangdong has excellent computing chips like the Huawei Ascend and self-developed general-purpose models like Tencent Cloud, according to Qu.

And the eight major models in the AI industry of Guangdong have been preliminarily applied in related fields and achieved significant results, he added.

Wang Jian, general manager of Tencent Cloud Guangdong province, said Tencent Cloud's AI large model has been implemented in more than 30 industries, including government affairs, retail, finance and industry.

Tencent will continue to lower the technological threshold and focus on scenario implementation, using its "useful, easy-to-use, and reliable" AI

capabilities to help Guangdong's AI and robotics industry enter into an era of global, full-time and all-scenario intelligence, he said.

"And we have now launched Tencent Cloud Intelligent Computing Suite by integrating high-performance computing, storage, networking, acceleration suite, cloud native intelligent scheduling and orchestration capabilities, to help customers manage their economic accounts with computing power," Wang said.

Hao Shengwei, marketing director of Huawei Ascend Computing Business, said Huawei Ascend has been focusing on key technologies and continues to innovate by combining computing, storage, networking and other capabilities.

"It has continuously improved its hardware and software capabilities, developed many fusion operators, and opened up many basic software and capabilities to partners for them to create their own applications and operators," he said.

Hao said more than 80 partners have now built their large model application all-in-one machines based on Ascend's computing power base, which have been applied in more than 200 enterprises.

"Many companies have built their own technology and computing power based on Ascend, and we will continue to make AI truly enter various industries," he added.

## COSCO unit to add more vessels

By ZHONG NAN  
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COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers Co, a unit of State-owned China COSCO Shipping Corp, will add 52 vessels, including car carriers, multipurpose and heavy-lift vessels, into its fleet by the end of this year, a senior executive said on Thursday.

This is driven by Chinese manufacturers' demand for transportation of wind power products, port machinery, railway transit equipment, new energy vehicles and energy storage devices, as well as demand for import of dry bulk goods by domestic companies.

The Guangzhou, Guangdong province-headquartered company said it will adopt new packing materials and digital solutions, as well as new services to better serve its customers in the years ahead.

"We will continue to leverage our global sales center, tonnage supply center and supply chain center to coordinate sales strategies across different markets and better manage global transportation resources, including vessels, containers and equipment," said Gu Weidong, vice-president of COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers.

At the same time, the shipping company aims to align operations among suppliers, carriers and service providers to achieve maximum operational efficiency in order to ensure a more streamlined and responsive global supply chain.

As one of the world's largest specialized shipping operators by fleet size, the company currently owns more than 170 vessels, including multipurpose and heavy-lift vessels, pulp vessels, semi-submersible ships, car and asphalt carriers. Its fleet is equipped to handle the transport of oversized and overweight cargoes, including oil rigs, engineering and port machinery, locomotives, wind power equipment, bridge cranes and port machinery.

As the world grapples with rising unilateralism and protectionism, COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers and its partners came to an agreement during its global partner conference held in Guangzhou in late March.

They will jointly build a high-quality development ecosystem for industrial chains — fostering symbiosis to mitigate risks, advancing together to drive upgrades and deepening cooperation to accelerate growth.

Gu said this industrial chain-based development approach will contribute to the high-quality advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative.

To meet the rapidly growing export demand for construction machinery and engineering vehicles, COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers has launched the 40-foot (12.5 meter) composite-material ultrawide flat-rack container to assist its customers in reducing cargo damage and discrepancies, lowering costs and enhancing operational efficiency.

This innovative container uses composite materials, significantly reducing weight compared to traditional flat-racks and greatly enhancing corrosion resistance, making it well-suited for high-salinity and high-humidity environments.

Gu said that the flat-rack container is designed for flexible loading of construction machinery, engineering vehicles and general cargo. Its standardized loading configuration improves handling efficiency, and enables multipurpose use with a single container.

In the automotive logistics sector, he said the company will upgrade its services offerings through digital and intelligent technologies to enable cross-regional integration and build an end-to-end industrial-level intelligent platform for Chinese automobile exports.

## Land aircraft carrier



Technicians inspect an electric multiple unit train on Tuesday at Ningbo EMU train operations depot, built by China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd, in Zhejiang province. Covering a construction area of 60,000 square meters with 17 individual buildings, it manages parking, maintenance and overhaul of high-speed trains, and is dubbed a "land aircraft carrier", becoming the first such depot traversing the 100-meter-wide Houtang River in the Yangtze River Delta region. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

## Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 26 pips to 7.2092 against the US dollar on Thursday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot for-

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

## Digitalized power grid bolstered

The State Grid is applying more new technologies in building its digital power grid nationwide, ensuring stable power supplies. In Jiangsu province, power staff members have installed intelligent fault alarm devi-

ces, using the internet of things and artificial intelligence tech to monitor transmission lines' operating status in real time. State Grid Xuzhou Power Supply Co said the device installed on the 110-kilovolt Hongmiao Line showcases a new phase of "intelligent perception and rapid response", raising work efficiency by

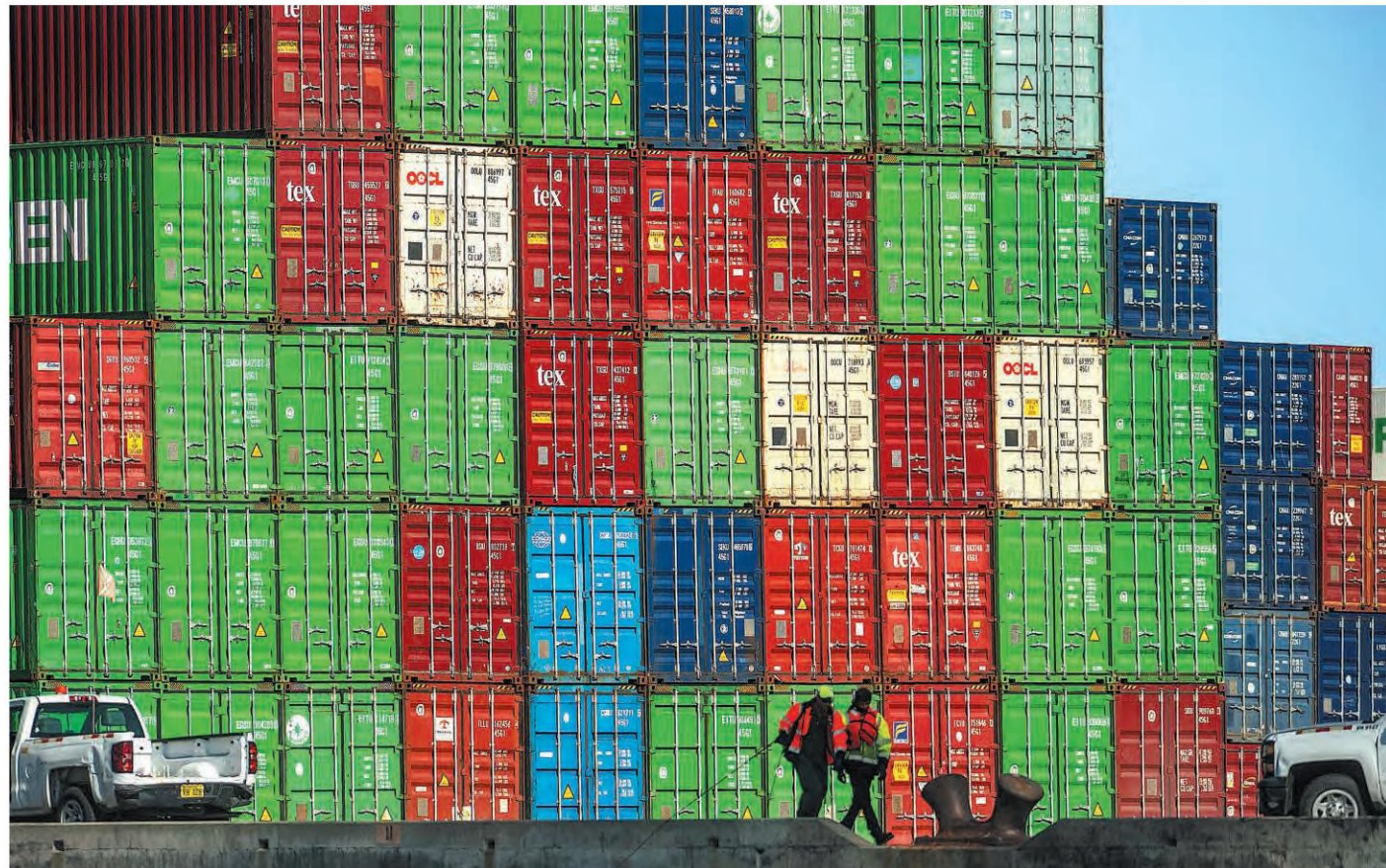
80 percent over traditional manual inspection. Staff member Cen Zijian said the device, integrating high-precision sensors, BeiDou satellite positioning and 5G communication modules, can reduce power-outage durations by 80 percent.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

# GLOBAL LENS



**Above from left:** The tower storage facility of German carmaker Volkswagen in Wolfsburg, Germany, on March 11. The European Union must "respond firmly" to US tariffs, Robert Habeck, German economy minister said on March 27. RONNY HARTMANN / AFP People hold flags and signs as they protest in solidarity with Canada amid uncertainty over tariffs policy, near the Canada-US border in Buffalo, US state of New York, on April 2. LINDSAY DEARIO / REUTERS A shopper reaches for a carton of eggs from a grocery store asking customers to limit their purchases in South Pasadena, California, on Feb 10. The Conference Board said US consumer confidence fell for a fourth straight month in March. FREDERIC J BROWN / AFP **Below:** Dockworkers secure lines from a container ship at the Port of Oakland, California, on Monday. NOAH BERGER / AP



# SCORING AN OWN GOAL

As countries choose between retaliation and deal-making, tariffs seen as damaging even for US

**U**S President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday a 90-day pause on tariffs for more than 75 trading partners that "did not retaliate" after his sweeping duties went into effect. Experts warned the shift in tariff policy may not be enough to stave off a recession.

Daniel Russel, vice-president of international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said "the whiplash from constant zigzags creates more of the uncertainty that businesses and governments hate".

Stephen Olson, a visiting senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, joined Al Jazeera earlier to discuss the fallout of Trump's latest trade moves. He said actions of the US could lead to China being seen as a more reliable trading partner by other countries.

Trump's turnaround, which came less than 24 hours after steep new tariffs kicked in on most trading partners, followed the most intense episode of financial market volatility since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The upheaval erased trillions of dollars from stock markets and led to an unsettling surge in US government bond yields.

The reversal on the country-specific tariffs is not absolute. A 10 percent blanket duty on almost all US imports will remain in effect, the White House said. The announcement also does not appear to affect duties on autos, steel and aluminum that are already in place.

The 90-day freeze also does not apply to duties paid by Canada and Mexico, because their goods are still subject to 25 percent fentanyl-related tariffs.

China has accused the US of economic bullying, protectionism and unilateralism. China also urged US firms, including Tesla, to "take concrete actions" to help resolve the dispute.

Germany's leading economic institutes have slashed their growth outlook for 2025 in consideration of Trump's tariffs on steel, aluminium and cars.

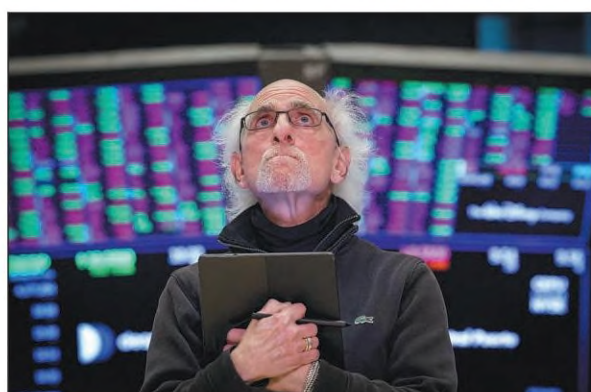
Yet some other trading partners of the US remained cautious against the intimidation of the world's biggest economy, fearing that slapping their own tariffs on US goods would only make things worse.

Analysts say there's little to be gained from an all-out trade war, since higher tariffs can restrain growth and raise inflation.

The head of the World Trade Organization warned that US protectionist measures will likely cause global trade volumes to drop by about 1 percent this year.

"I am deeply concerned about this decline and the potential for escalation into a tariff war with a cycle of retaliatory measures that lead to further declines in trade," said WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

Joe Brusuelas, chief economist of consulting firm RSM US, warned the shift in tariff policy may not be



**From top:** US President Donald Trump is seen on a television screen on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York City on Monday. SPENCER PLATT VIA AFP A trader works on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange on Monday. BRENDAN MCDERMID / REUTERS

enough to stave off a recession. And in a note to clients, Goldman Sachs economists projected a 45 percent chance of a recession over the next 12 months.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said his government would react with "cool and calm heads".

"Nobody wins in a trade war, that is not in our national interest," Starmer said.

### Higher prices loom

The tariffs are not paid by the foreign countries they target, but by the US-based companies that buy the goods to sell to US citizens. Now companies must decide whether to absorb the new taxes or pass them on to consumers in the form of higher prices.

After Trump added tariffs to imported washing machines during his first term, the median price of an appliance jumped more than 11 percent, adding about \$86 to the cost of a new unit, according to University of Chicago researchers.

A recent CNBC survey found most CEOs saying prices will rise anywhere from 5 percent to 20 percent.

US consumers could end up paying an additional \$2,500 to \$5,000 for the lowest-cost US cars, and up to \$20,000 for some imported models, according to an April 2 estimate from Anderson Economic Group.

"Businesses are starting to raise prices in anticipation of how to weather this storm, which means costs are going up for families," said Senator Elizabeth Warren on CNBC on Wednesday.

A Reuters and Ipsos survey found that three out of four US citizens expect prices to increase in the months ahead. Some 57 percent of poll respondents of the survey said they opposed the new tariffs, which include levies of at least 10 percent on imports from almost every country.

The makers of Italy's Parmigiano Reggiano cheese say the new tariffs mean US consumers will pay more for their crumbly pasta topping.

"Americans continued to choose us even when the price went up" after an earlier round of Trump tariffs in 2019, said Nicola Bertinelli, president of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium. "Putting tariffs on a product like ours only increases the price for US consumers, without protecting local producers."

The Consumer Brands Association in the US, which represents big food companies like Coca-Cola and consumer product makers like Procter & Gamble, warned that though its businesses make most of their goods in the US, they now face tariffs on critical ingredients — like wood pulp for toilet paper — that must be imported because of domestic scarcity.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## WORLD

# EU to pause retaliatory tariffs on US

Bloc 'giving negotiations a chance' after Trump announced suspension of duties

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels  
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The European Union said it will press the pause button on its retaliatory tariffs against the United States just a day after the bloc's member states agreed on the first countermeasures against the US trade war and hours after US President Donald Trump announced a 90-day suspension of "reciprocal tariffs" on most of its trading partners.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Thursday that the commission took note of Trump's announcement.

"We want to give negotiations a chance. While finalizing the adoption of the EU countermeasures that saw strong support from our member states, we will put them on hold for 90 days," she said on X. "If negotiations are not satisfactory, our countermeasures will kick in."

She expressed that preparatory work on further countermeasures continues, reiterating "all options remain on the table".

EU member states approved tariffs between 10-25 percent on a range of US imports such as almonds, orange juice, poultry, soybeans, steel and aluminum, tobacco and yachts — the bloc's countermeasures against the 25 percent tariffs placed by the US on steel and aluminum imports from the EU. The tariffs were initially set to be rolled out in phases starting April 15, hitting a total of 21 billion euros (\$23 billion) of US products, but are now paused.

Hungary was the only one among 27 member states to vote against the retaliation. France, Italy and the Republic of Ireland have successfully lobbied to remove Kentucky bourbon whiskey from the hit list after Trump threatened that the US would impose a 200 percent tariff on wines and spirits from the EU if it is on the list.

Observers noted that the list targets many Republican states in the US to inflict pain on Trump's political base.

"The EU considers US tariffs unjustified and damaging, causing

economic harm to both sides, as well as the global economy," the European Commission said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Clear, predictable conditions are essential for trade and supply chains to function. Tariffs are taxes that only hurt businesses and consumers," von der Leyen said in another post on X on Thursday.

## 'Wrong signal'

At the Thursday daily news briefing, European Commission spokesmen refused to answer when asked why the EU is pausing the countermeasures when the US has not paused its steel and aluminum tariffs, and whether the EU has been sending a wrong signal to Trump, who has been destroying the global trading system.

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University, said although the EU wants a negotiated settlement, it has also realized that retaliation measures are necessary to force the US to come to the negotiation table.

"Europeans realize that if they show weakness to Trump, he will tighten up more," Ding said.

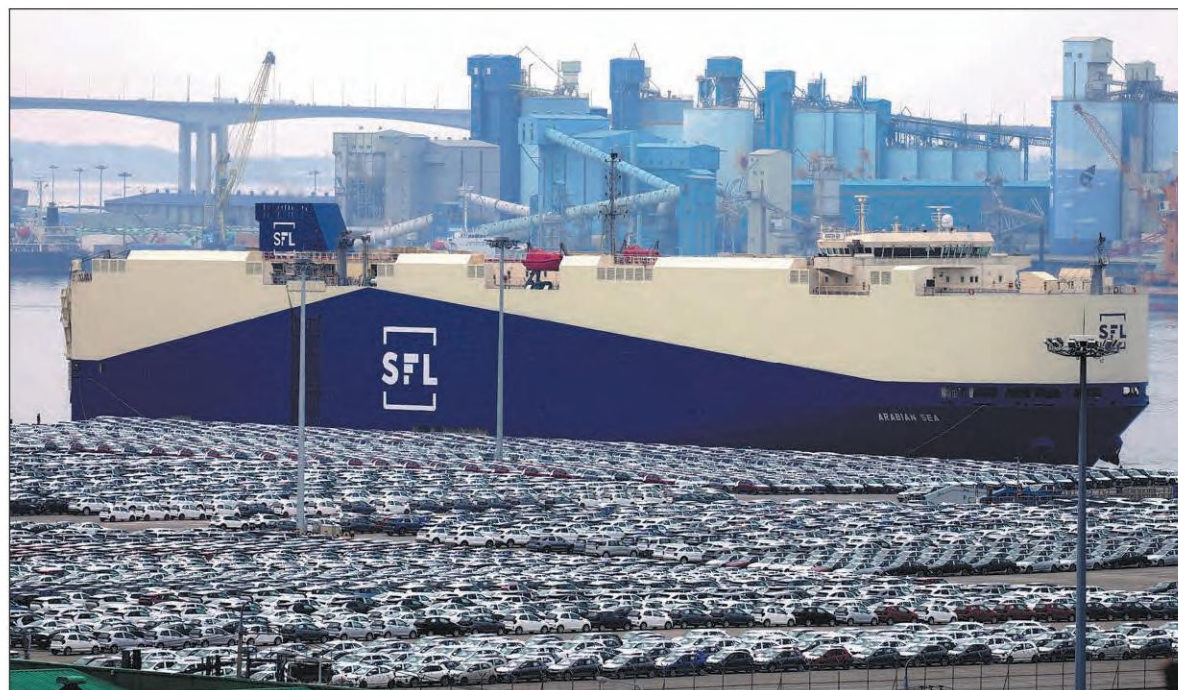
Ding said the EU has many tools, including the Anti-Coercion Instrument, or ACI, known as the trade "bazooka" or nuclear option, to hit back against US tech giants since the US has a trade surplus with the EU in services.

Barry Andrews, a member of the European Parliament from Ireland, said it is difficult to figure out what the intentions are and who is making decisions in the US right now.

"We don't know if this is an overall attempt to overturn the international rules-based order, or something more short-term, more transactional," he posted on X on Wednesday.

Andrews noted that the EU has built many trade defense measures including the ACI to deal with the current situation. He added that the bloc should also look to diversify its trade.

"What has happened in the last two months is a huge challenge to (the) Irish economy," he said.



Vehicles for export are parked at a port in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, on Wednesday. LEE JIN-MAN / AP

## Experts urge deeper Beijing-Tokyo-Seoul cooperation

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong and JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo

As the United States' "tariff war" piles pressure on the global economy, experts say China, Japan and South Korea must unite through deeper cooperation and conclude a free trade agreement, or FTA, as soon as possible to promote regional stability and prosperity.

It is "extremely important" that the three major Asian countries "enhance communication and seek solutions to shared challenges," said Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economist and Japan's former parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs.

Their cooperation will benefit not only Asia but the entire world, serving as a compass for global progress, Hamada told China Daily, noting US actions have infringed on FTAs and sparked a backlash from many countries.

At a meeting in the South Korean capital Seoul on March 30, economic and trade ministers from China, Japan and South Korea agreed to expedite negotiations on their trilateral FTA and enhance cooperation in supply chain management and export controls, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

The idea of the countries establishing a free trade zone was first proposed in 2002, with 16 rounds

of negotiations held since 2013.

On April 2, US President Donald Trump announced "reciprocal tariffs," imposing a 10 percent "minimum baseline tariff" and higher rates on certain trading partners, including China (34 percent), Japan (24 percent) and South Korea (25 percent). He further increased the tariff for imports from China to 125 percent on Wednesday.

Trump earlier announced a 25 percent tariff on imports of automobiles and some auto parts.

Noting that the US is the biggest automotive export destination for Japan and South Korea, Oxford Economics estimated on Monday that both Asian countries' auto production will shrink by about 7 percent as a result of the tariff hikes, with the impact likely to hit total industrial output.

## Going against trend

Hidetoshi Tashiro, chief economist at Japanese consultancy Infinity LLC, told China Daily that by implementing protectionist trade policies and undermining free trade, the US is going against the global economic trend.

"Japan, China and South Korea must promptly conclude an FTA to protect the economies of the three countries from the storm of Trump-era tariffs," said Tashiro.

To ensure the FTA is free, fair, high-

quality and mutually beneficial, Tashiro said it is important to prearrange a follow-up agreement that includes intellectual property rights protection partnerships. The three nations should also establish a structured dialogue framework, he said.

This includes regular quarterly meetings of economic ministers on a rotating basis, alongside frequent working-level discussions to enhance information-sharing and build stronger interpersonal ties among officials. Such institutionalized cooperation will be key to the FTAs' long-term success, Tashiro added.

The trilateral FTA has faced delays due to trade imbalance fears, with South Korea worried about deficits with Japan, Japan seeking to protect its surplus and both fearing China will gain disproportionately, said Kim Dong-ha, a professor of Chinese studies at Busan University of Foreign Studies.

"South Korea already signed an FTA with China in 2015, reducing momentum for signing the trilateral FTA," Kim told China Daily.

However, trade balances have improved, with South Korea's trade deficit with Japan falling to \$18 billion last year from \$20 billion in 2014, while China's deficit with South Korea halved to \$35 billion over the same period, said Kim.

"The three countries should make

good use of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership experience values," said Kim, noting that the success of the RCEP — of which China, Japan and South Korea are all members — provided a testing ground for trilateral cooperation.

Kim said it is also necessary to allow the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat to perform more economic functions for closer cooperation.

With South Korea set to elect a new president in June, the new leadership must address ties with China using a different approach, said Korea-China Exchange Promotion Committee Chairman Lee Chang-ho.

"Enhancing ties with China through a multilateral foreign policy can help South Korea tackle challenges such as US tariffs and contribute to stabilizing the global economy," Lee said, adding that cooperation with Japan is also essential.

Political economist Hamada added that Japan, China and South Korea should also cooperate with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Global South to build a system of interdependence in economic and cultural spheres, not based on US-centric unilateralism but on the vision of a shared future for mankind.

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## S. African businesses call for diversifying economy

By NDUMISO MLILO in Johannesburg  
For China Daily

South Africa needs to diversify its economy, boost domestic consumption and increase collaboration with potential trade partners to cope with the high tariffs imposed by the United States, observers said, while calling for more efforts to protect the "rules-based trading system".

Alan Mukoki, CEO of the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the government and businesses in South Africa are concerned with the US tariff policies and urged the authorities to take measures to cope with it.

The US slapped a 31 percent tariff on South African goods on April 2. One week later, US President Donald Trump said that he was pausing tariffs above 10 percent

for most US trading partners.

Mukoki said that South Africa should work toward developing a huge domestic market to reduce reliance on exports and address education with a focus on science and technology, engineering, mathematics, manufacturing and industrialization, and developing infrastructure, to help develop the local market.

More than 7 percent of South Africa's total exports went to the US last year, while South Africa accounted for just 0.4 percent of total US imports.

"South Africa will leverage the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, or AfCFTA, to bolster intra-African trade, fostering stronger regional economic integration and cooperation," said Ronald Lamola, South African minister of international relations and cooperation.

"This approach aligns with the national interest of contributing to a better Africa and world. Efforts will intensify to diversify export destinations, targeting markets across Africa, as well as in Asia, Europe, Middle East and the Americas."

Sizo Nkala, a research fellow at the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Africa-China Studies, said the tariffs imposed on many countries last week by the US represent a "dark day" for the global economy.

"South Africa's response to the unjustified US tariffs is quite reasonable and comprehensive," he said. "It emphasizes the revitalization of regional trade through the AfCFTA, diversifying trade alliances by deepening ties with potential export markets like the European Union, Asia and the Middle East, among others, negotiating sectoral

trade deals with the US and building both domestic manufacturing and consumption capacities to reduce reliance on exports."

Tariffs on South Africa and other countries will affect the global economy and economic growth, Nkala said.

"South Africa must take advantage of its G20 presidency to drive conversations on the protection of the rules-based trading system and the improvement of the World Trade Organization," he said.

Mabalane Mfundisi, the C20 Sherpa for the G20, said the US should work with other countries to build a better world. "We need each other in this world, America cannot survive on its own, it needs others," he said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



A worker restocks Italian olive oil at Claro's Italian Market in Arcadia, California, on April 4. Italy exports billions of dollars worth of agri-food products and wine to the US. MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES

## China seen as sheet anchor amid global trade storm

By CUI HAIPEI in Abu Dhabi, UAE  
cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

The tariff crisis brought about by the United States has offered a unique opportunity for China to establish itself as the world's indispensable partner under the principles of multilateralism and free trade, a business executive from the Middle East has said.

Zayed bin Aweidha, CEO of Abu Dhabi Investment Group, or ADIG, said the world is on the edge of an international economic crisis, as panic sentiments took hold of the market on Monday and erased trillions in investor wealth.

"The tariffs are just a trigger and the problem is much bigger because the United States wants to make another kind of world trade order (which is) more focused on itself," he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily, suggesting the US aims to reshape global trade rules favoring its own interests.

His comments on the sidelines of the Annual Investment Meeting Congress in Abu Dhabi coincided with escalating economic tensions as the global economy was shaken up after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on April 2 on the so-called reciprocal tariffs.

As China advances institutional reforms and cultivates new quality productive forces, the CEO highlighted China's strategic positioning amid the turmoil.

For now, the Middle East is a very good option for China to cooperate with, he said, adding that the United Arab Emirates has the largest number of sovereign funds in the world.

"I think this crisis might be the worst one and it requires a minimum of five to 10 years for recovery," he predicted, drawing parallels to historical crises. "You can't just make the very rich richer. You can't take all the wealth from all over the

world and centralize it in the US. This creates a disturbance in the global economy," he said.

The US unilateral imposition of "reciprocal tariffs" is affecting countries and regions worldwide, including some economies classified as "least developed countries" by the United Nations. On Wednesday, Trump said he was pausing his new tariffs for most trading partners for 90 days.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in its latest Economic Outlook, forecast that global GDP growth is projected to moderate to 3.1 percent in 2025 and 3 percent in 2026. The

OECD also warned that higher and broader trade barriers will negatively impact growth around the world and add to inflation.

Sean Doherty, head of international trade and investment and a member of the executive committee at the World Economic Forum, said an escalation of trade conflicts will be "extremely damaging" to the global economy as the tariffs are troubling for businesses because of uncertainties.

## 'Inefficient tool'

"Tariffs ultimately are an inefficient policy tool. One of the most important things for trade and investment is predictability. I think one of the difficulties with the latest tariffs is that businesses are uncertain as to what the future of

the means (will be)," he said.

"Global rules-based frameworks remain critical for supply chain predictability," Doherty stressed, adding that businesses need a clear understanding of the policy actions taken by other countries for long-term predictability and stability in order to build global value chains.

Although the US is a large and important economy, Doherty said it still makes up for a small fraction of global trade.

"One of the most important things that we can do at the moment is to facilitate trade that is still wanted. One of the reactions to the new tariffs will be that businesses will diversify their supply chains and look to new markets. That may mean trading more with Africa, Latin America and South Asia," he added.

## WORLD



Teams conduct search and rescue operations in the rubble of destroyed buildings following the Israeli attack on residential areas in a neighborhood of Gaza City on Wednesday. ALI JADALLAH/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Dozens killed in Gaza attacks amid ceasefire deadlock

GAZA — Dozens of Palestinians were killed and many others wounded as the Israeli military continued intensive airstrikes across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, while ceasefire negotiations between Hamas and Israel remain deadlocked.

"At least 35 people were killed and more than 50 others injured in an Israeli airstrike targeting a residential area in the Shuja'iyya neighborhood east of Gaza City," said Mahmoud Basal, spokesman for the Civil Defense in Gaza, updating a previous death toll of 29. In addition, at least five more were killed in a later strike on a house in the same neighborhood, he added.

Basal noted that rescue operations were ongoing amid severe equipment and resource shortages, highlighting additional challenges facing Civil Defense teams — particularly after their headquarters were reportedly struck, with several crew members injured.

Residents reported hearing massive explosions. "Smoke and dust filled the air," said Fares Awad, a resident from the Shuja'iyya neighborhood. "The scenes were horrific. Bodies were scattered in the

streets, homes were destroyed, and many of the victims were children."

In southern Gaza, multiple locations were attacked, resulting in casualties. Three people were killed in the Al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, while an elderly man and a woman reportedly died after an airstrike on a tent sheltering displaced persons in Rafah, according to Palestinian sources.

In central Gaza, a strike hit the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp and killed two persons, the sources added.

Hamas condemned the "massacres committed by the Israeli army with American support."

**'Systematic attempt'**

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry denounced the airstrikes as "a systematic attempt to force mass displacement and eradicate the Palestinian presence in Gaza".

Israeli media outlets claimed that the attacks were aimed at assassinating Haitham al-Sheikh, a senior Hamas commander allegedly responsible for coordinating attacks against Israel.

The Israeli army claimed in a statement that its troops were working to "eliminate terrorist

infrastructure" and had conducted over 45 air operations against Palestinian targets.

Israel said on Wednesday its troops were seizing "large areas" in Gaza and making the Palestinian territory "smaller and more isolated".

Defence Minister Israel Katz said that "large areas are being seized and added to Israel's security zones, leaving Gaza smaller and more isolated", during a visit to the newly announced Morag Corridor between the southern cities of Rafah and Khan Younis.

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, said that France plans to recognize a Palestinian state in the "coming months", a move that risks antagonizing Israel which insists such moves by foreign states are premature.

Katz emphasized that Israel would keep increasing pressure on Gaza "until the hostages are freed and Hamas is defeated".

Katz also said Israel was encouraging plans for "voluntary emigration ... in accordance with the vision of the US president, which we are working to implement".

US President Donald Trump this year proposed a plan to develop

Gaza into a "Riviera of the Middle East" while displacing its population elsewhere.

According to Gaza-based health authorities, the number of Palestinians killed since Israel ended a two-month ceasefire and resumed military operations on March 18 has risen to 1,482.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is also deteriorating rapidly.

On Wednesday, health authorities in Gaza said around 60,000 children are facing life-threatening malnutrition due to the continued closure of border crossings by Israel, which has blocked the entry of food, humanitarian assistance and medical supplies.

The persistent Israeli strikes come amid a deadlock in Gaza ceasefire negotiations. In a statement, Hamas official Husam Badran said the current ceasefire proposals remain "incomplete," but discussions with mediators continue.

Hamas maintains that any agreement must include a comprehensive ceasefire and a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza — conditions Israel has so far rejected.

XINHUA — AGENCIES

## Merz unveils deal for new coalition govt

Chancellor-in-waiting promises to spur growth as survey shows far right gains

By JULIAN SHEA in London  
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

German conservatives under Friedrich Merz clinched a coalition deal on Wednesday, aiming to revive growth in Europe's largest economy just as global uncertainties threaten recession.

The conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, or CDU/CSU, after having emerged as the largest party in February's parliamentary election, has now secured a coalition deal with the center-left Social Democrats, or SPD.

Talks between the party of chancellor-in-waiting Merz and the SPD, which came third in the election behind the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, has been going on for a while. Now an extra element of urgency has been injected by the global economic turmoil caused by the United States' tariff policy.

As he announced the deal, Merz said economy, defense and migration, a particularly contentious election issue, would all be on his agenda in his bid to reform the country and make it more stable.

"Europe can rely on Germany," he added, pledging "a strong plan to bring our country to the forefront again ... Germany is getting a government that is capable of action and (is) strong".

Merz also had a message specifically for the White House, delivered in English. "The key message to (United States President) Donald Trump is Germany is back on track," he said.

Policies the coalition intends to pursue, Merz said, include lowering energy prices, reducing taxes, increasing support for the electric vehicle industry, and reforming the constitutionally enshrined government spending limits known as the debt brake — which critics said has hampered growth in Europe's biggest economy.

With the AfD breathing down its neck, the coalition signaled a tougher stance on migration, planning to turn away asylum-seekers at Germany's borders and scrapping fast-tracked naturalization.

It also announced a voluntary

military service and the creation of a national security council, as well as moves to speed up defense procurement and backing Ukraine's bid to join the NATO alliance.

The swift conclusion of the talks, a process that has in past years dragged on for months in Germany, is the result of "extraordinary external pressure," said political scientist Wolfgang Schroeder of Kassel University.

"The pressure is coming from Trump, the pressure is coming from the AfD, the pressure is coming from (Merz's) own ranks," he told news channel NTV.

**Record support**

A new poll published on Wednesday shows the AfD as the most popular party for the first time, scoring 25 percent, as opposed to Merz's party with 24 percent.

Renate Koecher, head of the Allensbach Institute, said the rise of the AfD had been fueled by Germany's political paralysis at a time of acute global and domestic crises.

"Problems are growing, but at the same time we have no government capable of acting," Koecher told the Rheinische Post newspaper.

"The economy is facing increasing difficulties and decisions are being made in the US that Europe, with Germany in a leading role, should be able to respond to quickly," she said.

"And in this situation, we have a power vacuum. This fuels the unease among the population."

In response to the latest polling figures, AfD Co-chair Alice Weidel said: "There's no way around the AfD anymore."

Writing on social media platform X, she said it was time for a "true, bourgeois political shift", as German voters "don't want another left-wing government in which the CDU/CSU lets the SPD and Greens dictate their policies".

The SPD and the Green Party were two of the coalition partners in the previous government that fell apart toward the end of last year, bringing forward this year's scheduled parliamentary election, from fall to spring.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Youth urged to strengthen China-Vietnam media ties

By YANG HAN in Hanoi  
kelly@chinadailyjapac.com

Media organizations in China and Vietnam should work together to tell the story of the nations' joint efforts in promoting peace and shared development, serving as a bridge for people-to-people exchanges, a forum heard on Thursday.

At an event themed "Dialogue in the New Era: China-Vietnam Exchange for Young Media Professionals" held in Hanoi, media industry leaders from the two countries stressed the importance of close cooperation.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Vietnam, as well as the China-Vietnam Year of People-to-People Exchanges. At the forum, Ngo Minh Hien, vice-president of the state-run broadcaster Voice of Vietnam, said the media cooperation not only

deepens mutual understanding but also enhances ties.

"I believe that based on our solid foundation in the past, Vietnam-China media collaboration will continue to grow," said Hien.

"In particular, I hope that reporters from both sides will pay more visits to each other's countries and convey the true stories of cooperation and friendship."

The forum, guided by China's State Council Information Office, was jointly organized by the information office of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, the China Intercontinental Communication Center, or CICC, and Voice of Vietnam.

More than 500 representatives from media organizations, universities and enterprises in both countries participated in the event. A parallel session was held simultaneously in Nanning, Guangxi.

Li Pan, director of the Guangxi information office, said he hopes

that more young media professionals in the region can work with their peers to serve as messengers of exchanges, facilitators of cooperation and guardians of harmonious coexistence.

"Young people should offer their insights and wisdom and demonstrate their commitment to advancing the development of the China-Vietnam comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and the building of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance," said Li.

The forum also witnessed the launch of "The Path of Development", coproduced by Guangxi Radio and Television and Voice of Vietnam. The joint production team visited 10 provinces and cities in both countries and interviewed more than 40 people to showcase the milestones in bilateral relations.

Directors Qin Tong from China and Nguyen Van Phu from Viet-

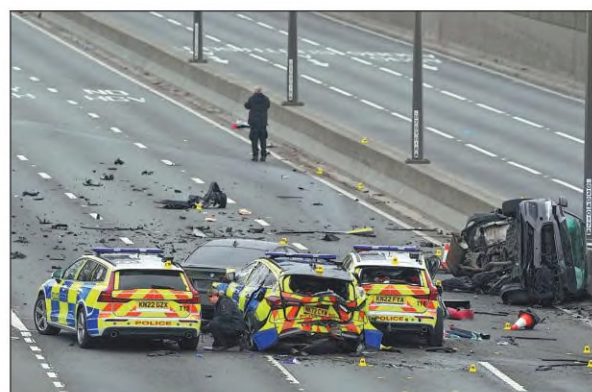
nam shared how the team overcame challenges and documented stories of bilateral friendship.

Nguyen Vinh Quang, vice-president of the Vietnam-China Friendship Association, who features in the documentary, said he hopes it can help young people understand the history of Vietnam-China relations and remind them of the original aspiration of leaders from both nations to foster friendly ties.

A new media exchange initiative titled "Comrades and Brothers, Together Toward the Future" was launched by the Guangxi International Communication Center and CICC in collaboration with leading Vietnamese media outlets.

The program will see media representatives from both countries conduct joint reporting trips in Guangxi, Sichuan province and Guizhou province in China, and in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

## Chase carnage



Vehicles collide and seven police officers are injured as officers try to stop a car because of concerns over the way it was being driven, on a highway in Newcastle, the United Kingdom, on Wednesday. OWEN HUMPHREYS VIA AP

## US imposes fresh sanctions on Iran ahead of nuclear talks

WASHINGTON — The United States imposed fresh sanctions on Iran on Wednesday, the Treasury Department said, two days after President Donald Trump announced the US planned "direct" talks with Teheran over its nuclear program.

The department designated five entities and one person based in Iran for their support of Iran's nuclear program, it said in a statement, with the aim of denying Iran a nuclear weapon.

The action comes after Trump made a surprise announcement on Monday that the United States and Iran were poised to begin direct talks on Teheran's nuclear program.

Iran's President Masoud Pezesh-

kian said on Wednesday that the upcoming negotiations with the United States in Oman will be held indirectly.

He made the remarks at a ceremony to mark National Nuclear Technology Day, which fell on Wednesday, while elaborating on the talks in Oman, according to a statement published on the website of his office.

"The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran on major issues is the one repeatedly and explicitly stated by the country's supreme leader," he said, adding, "Regarding other issues, dialogue will take place where interaction is possible."

Pezeshkian stressed that Iran

was ready for interaction and dialogue, but such an interaction should be "indirect, honorable, and with clear guarantees ... as we do not trust the other side yet".

The president again pledged that his nation is "not after a nuclear bomb" ahead of the talks.

"We are not after a nuclear bomb," Pezeshkian added. "You (in the West) have verified it 100 times. Do it 1,000 times again."

In a further sign of the difficult path to any deal between the two countries, Trump issued a stark warning that if the talks were unsuccessful, "Iran is going to be in great danger."

After Trump's threat, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader said on Thurs-

day that Teheran may suspend cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog if external threats continue.

"Continued external threats and putting Iran under the conditions of a military attack could lead to deterrent measures like the expulsion of IAEA inspectors and ceasing cooperation with it," Ali Shamkhani said on X, referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The person targeted by the new sanctions is Majid Mosallat, managing director of the Atbin Ista Technical and Engineering Company, who, the US said, helps the company acquire components from foreign suppliers.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## WORLD

## Pentagon chief: We respect Panama Canal sovereignty

PANAMA CITY — Panama said on Wednesday the United States recognized its sovereignty over the Panama Canal, despite tough rhetoric from Washington, as the two countries announced agreements to deepen US military training in the Central American country.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also gave a public nod to Panamanian sovereignty at the conclusion of the first visit by a Pentagon chief to Panama in decades. Hegseth said he sees the canal as key terrain that Panama would secure together with the US.

During Hegseth's visit, the US and Panama issued joint statements about deepening security cooperation. However, the statement's English-language version did not include a sentence that was in the Spanish version published by Panama — speaking about Panama's sovereignty over the canal.

The sentence read, "In addition, Secretary Hegseth recognized the leadership and inalienable sovereignty of Panama over the Panama Canal and its adjacent areas."

Speaking to reporters shortly before boarding his flight back to Washington, Hegseth said, "We certainly respect the sovereignty of the Panamanians and the Panama Canal."

He expressed gratitude that

Panama has welcomed US troops on Panamanian soil "by invitation through rotational, joint exercises."

Panama's Minister of Public Security Frank Abrego said Panama would not allow permanent military bases.

"Panama made clear, through President (Jose Raul) Mulino, that we cannot accept military bases or defense sites," Abrego said in a joint public appearance with Hegseth.

"Secretary Hegseth, in the meeting we had in private, recognized the sovereignty of Panama over the Panama Canal," he told reporters.

More than 40 percent of US container traffic, valued at roughly \$270 billion a year, goes through the Panama Canal, accounting for more than two-thirds of vessels passing each day through the world's second-busiest interoceanic waterway.

Hegseth's trip followed reports that the Donald Trump administration has requested options from the US military to ensure access to the canal, which the United States funded, built and controlled until 1999.

Trump has complained that handing over the canal was a bad deal for the US.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino (left) looks on as US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth signs a bilateral agreement, in Panama City on Wednesday. FRANCO BRANA / AFP

## Briefly

TURKIYE  
US, Russia meet for talks on embassies

US and Russian delegations met in Istanbul on Thursday for a second round of talks on restoring normal operations of their diplomatic missions. The talks are led by Russia's new Ambassador to the United States Alexander Darchiev and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Sonata Coulter, Russia's Foreign Ministry said. The main focus is to address issues affecting the functioning of the embassies and consulates in each other's country.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC  
Death toll in nightclub disaster rises to 218

The death toll after a roof collapsed at a nightclub in the Dominican Republic has climbed to 218, the head of rescue operations said on Thursday. Rescuers had worked frantically since the collapse in the early hours of Tuesday to dig out survivors from the rubble of the Jet

Set club in Santo Domingo. "Unfortunately and with regret, (there are) 218 people dead as per preliminary data," said Juan Manuel Mendez, director of the Emergency Operations Center. An official statement said earlier that "all reasonable possibilities of finding more survivors" had been exhausted, and the focus of the operation will turn to recovering bodies.

SOUTH KOREA  
Opposition leader Lee opens presidential bid

South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, the front-runner in opinion polls to be the country's next leader, declared his bid for the presidency on Thursday. The presidential election will be held on June 3, after the impeachment of former president Yoon Suk-yeol was upheld on April 4. Han Dong-hoon, former leader of the ruling People Power Party, also said on Thursday that he was running.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



## March of the wild

Performers display life-size animal puppets — including a wildebeest, gorilla and giraffe — during the launch of The Herds, a public art and climate action project, in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Wednesday. The puppets are set to embark on a 20,000-kilometer journey across continents to spotlight the growing effects of climate change on migration and displacement. HARDY BOPE / AFP

## US strategic shift alarms world

## Experts warn of aggressive nationalism amid Washington's economic coercion

By CHEN YINGQUN  
chenyingqun@chinadaily.com.cn

To realize its "Make America Great Again" vision, the United States has clearly shifted its strategic focus. Its revised approach, based on the "America First" doctrine, includes using tariffs to coerce other nations to make policy concessions and decreasing foreign involvement.

Since US President Donald Trump started his second term on Jan 20, his administration has taken a series of measures that have garnered global attention. It has made significant moves to address domestic matters, such as declaring a national emergency over immigration and establishing the Department of Government Efficiency to reduce spending and regulations.

It also swiftly decided to exit international organizations and agreements, including the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement, to avoid global responsibilities.

In particular, Trump has been using tariffs as a weapon against other countries.

He has also expressed his wish to annex the mineral-rich Greenland and take back control of the Panama Canal, as well as claimed that Canada should be the 51st state of the US, triggering anger in Ottawa.

Li Haidong, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University's Institute of International Relations, said there is no doubt that the strategic focus of the US has undergone significant changes.

"The shift is not toward traditional globalism but toward a stronger nationalism," he said. "From a historical perspective, it exhibits characteristics of a 'new isolationism.' This means that the US is seeking a different way of interacting with other countries."

Li pointed out two key reasons for the strategic shift. First, Trump and other influential figures in the US have recognized that the world is now multipolar — a departure from the traditional belief that the US is the sole dominant power. Second, the US is dealing with numerous domestic crises, contrasting with its



former image as a prosperous and stable country.

Zhang Yifei, an associate researcher at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that throughout US history, there have been several times when the country has demonstrated "greatness". For instance, after World War II, the US spearheaded the creation of a capitalist world economic system and a global order. After the Cold War, US political, economic and military strength dominated the world.

"However, the current administration's vision of 'greatness' is reminiscent of the economic boom around the 1900s, known as the Gilded Age, when the US was less interested in international affairs," Zhang said.

He agreed there has been a notable shift in US global strategy. "The US is now more focused on domestic issues and seems less inclined to take on international responsibilities as a major power."

US proposals to acquire Greenland and the Panama Canal were largely motivated by the desire to secure mineral resources and vital transportation routes, he added.

"US actions are driven only by its own interests and abide by the 'America First' doctrine. Any moral expectations from the international community should be reconsidered," Zhang said. "For the US, everything is about business and tariffs are one of its primary tools for gaining global advantages, though their effectiveness is debatable."

Robert Gulotty, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago, said there is a broader concern within the Trump administration, which is to correct the trade imbalance the US has with the rest of the world.

"Tariffs aren't a particularly effective way to do that, but that's a goal they have," he said.

The US is also using tariffs as a

bargaining chip to coerce its allies and trade partners to make policy concessions. "It will be an interesting process. I don't think it will go very well," Gulotty said, adding that many countries are taking countermeasures.

Decades ago, the US developed international rules to favor itself and create regularity in the international trading system, he said. But now, by undermining these rules with tariffs, it is harming US multinationals that have thrived under this system.

Politically, raising tariffs against close allies such as Canada and Mexico alienates their populations, fueling nationalist sentiments that hinder cooperative efforts with the US, he added.

The only potential benefit is coercing other countries to comply with US demands, though the importance of these demands is unclear, Gulotty said.

Regarding foreign policy, Trump has also placed greater emphasis on increasing influence in Latin America, as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio made his first overseas visit there rather than the Asia-Pacific region as usual.

## Marginalizing Europe

The US has also marginalized its long-standing ally Europe during its discussions with Russia regarding the Ukraine crisis, highlighting the differing perspectives between the US and Europe on how to address the issue.

At the Munich Security Conference in February, US Vice-President JD Vance questioned whether European values are worth defending while mentioning a "threat from within", shocking European leaders seated in the audience.

Sven Biscop, director of the Europe in the World Programme at the Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels, said the Barack Obama administration was the first to state that, while Europe remained important to the United States, it was no longer the top priority, with the primary focus having since shifted to the Asia-Pacific region.

"What is new is that the Trump administration seems to be ideologically opposed to the European Union as such," Biscop said, adding that

Vance's performance at the Munich Security Conference was seen in Europe as "direct interference in European elections, notably in Germany and Romania".

"Many European leaders assumed that despite the US focus on Asia, they could always count on the US to defend Europe. Since Munich, they are not so sure," he said. "This may lead, not to the end of NATO, but to a major reconfiguration, in which the Europeans create a militarily autonomous force package that can deter and defend against any conventional threat to Europe even without American assets."

One question is whether Europe will also strengthen its own nuclear deterrence, led by France, he added.

Researcher Zhang said that for regions such as Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific, the US is expected to reduce direct involvement and adopt an offshore balancing strategy.

"This approach encourages regional powers to counterbalance each other, allowing the US to intervene only when necessary to prevent any one power from becoming dominant in strategically important areas," he said.

Regarding the strategy toward China, professor Li said Trump has made it clear that the competitive tone remains unchanged, though the language used by him and his team members might differ.

The China-US relationship is going through a phase of readjustment, and one should not be overly pessimistic or optimistic about it, he said.

"Trump's policies have introduced uncertainties for all parties involved. Ultimately, China should find a certainty that aligns with our interests, minimize negative factors and turn potential opportunities into optimistic outcomes."

However, as the world's two largest economies, if the US aims to achieve the goal of "Make America Great Again", it is essential that the nation manages well its relations with China, Li said.

Online  
See more by scanning the code.



## Appeals court clears way to re-fire federal workers

ALBANY, New York — A US appeals court cleared the way on Wednesday for 18 federal agencies to again fire thousands of employees who were reinstated after losing their jobs as part of US President Donald Trump's purge of the federal workforce.

The 4th United States Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, said the lower court judge in Maryland that ordered they be reinstated likely lacked the power to hear the lawsuit brought by 19 states and Washington, DC, to challenge the mass firings of probationary government employees in February.

Probationary employees typically have less than a year of service in their roles, though some are long-time federal workers in new jobs.

In its 2-1 decision, the appeals court stayed the Maryland ruling

pending the Trump administration's appeal, removing the last legal roadblock preventing the government from firing the employees again.

On Tuesday, the US Supreme Court paused a separate ruling by a judge in San Francisco requiring six agencies to reinstate nearly 17,000 probationary workers. Since five of those agencies were also defendants in the Maryland case, the practical effect of the high court's ruling had been limited.

The office of Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown, which is leading the lawsuit, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a statement, White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said the appeals court had upheld the president's removal powers. "The Trump administration continues to

rack up legal wins for the American people," Rogers said.

Federal agencies terminated roughly 25,000 probationary employees in mid-February after the US Office of Personnel Management directed them to identify probationary workers who were not essential.

The firings were part of a broader effort by Trump and billionaire Elon Musk to drastically shrink the federal bureaucracy and slash government spending, which has invited a series of legal challenges.

US District Judge James Bredar in Baltimore, Maryland, had issued a temporary restraining order requiring the government to reinstate about 24,600 probationary workers in March. Last week, he narrowed his ruling to people who live or work in Washington, DC, and the states that filed the lawsuit. The appeals court

paused that ruling on Wednesday.

The states said the mass firings violated a federal law requiring agencies to give states 60 days' notice of mass layoffs, and would lead to a spike in unemployment claims and demand for social services.

Meanwhile, about 4,000 employees of the US Transportation Department have applied to take a buyout plan that offers pay and benefits through Sept 30, a department official told Reuters. The figure is not final because it may include employees who are not eligible or some who sent more than one email seeking the buyout, the official said.

The offer, made last week, exempts public safety positions such as Federal Aviation Administration air traffic controllers and cybersecurity employees.

In February, about 75,000 federal



Fired Internal Revenue Service worker Brittany Glenn (right) talks to recruiter Lena Lager during a job fair for laid-off federal workers in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 15. CHARLIE RIEDEL / AP

employees across the government accepted buyout offers in the first round of the program led by Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, which has been tasked with cutting the size of the federal workforce.

More than a dozen other federal agencies have offered second chances for employees to take the offer in recent weeks.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Entire world should act to end Washington's attempted looting

Including the additional hike yesterday, the punitive tariffs the US administration has levied on imports from China have soared to 125 percent.

Given that US President Donald Trump announced the latest move on the grounds he has failed to see the desired capitulation from China, the *ab irato* nature of the tariffs — a Latin phrase used in law to describe a decision or action that is motivated by hatred or anger instead of reason — is evident.

As far as the trade war his administration has initiated is concerned, it is not a question of which side will blink first, it is a question of principles.

The president and his administration are trying to coerce the entire world into accepting the falsehood that the United States has been — hitherto unwittingly, presumably — ripped off, not just by China, but by the entire world in the past decades, so it is justifiable for the US to now seek payback.

Thus their premise is they can impose as many tariffs as they like on the US' trading partners. Any countermeasures, rather than grovelling entreaties for leniency, are considered to be disrespectful to the benevolence the US leader wants to dispense from on high and are therefore to be met with even more punitive tariffs to put any uppity countries in their place. It may be dressed in new clothes, but it is still the tired, old, might-makes-right approach that characterizes Washington's world view.

It is the mindset of rogues.

But in the midst of the escalating tensions, a silver lining has emerged as economies are positioning themselves to deepen their commitment to global economic cooperation, signaling a proactive stance toward trade facilitation and openness in the face of the US' denigratory assault on global trade ties.

The Ministry of Commerce revealed on Wednesday that China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao discussed in a video call on Tuesday with European trade and economic security commissioner Maros Sefcovic the restart of talks on trade relief and to immediately carry out negotiations on electric vehicle price commitments. This suggests that the European Union and China are on the same page when it comes to the US administration's imperious contempt for the international trade system.

Wang also had a video call on Wednesday with Tengku Zafrul Aziz, the minister of trade and industry of Malaysia, which holds the rotating chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. They talked about further economic cooperation between China and the ASEAN members under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement.

With the US administration demonstrating that it will not abide by the established rules and it will make new ones up as it goes along, China will undoubtedly make more overtures to expand its economic and trade cooperation with more countries on the basis of equality and mutual interest, so that the world mall is protected from the US' looting.

China has already shown its credentials as a strong defender of the global trade system under the framework of the World Trade Organization. It is this globalized trading system, from which countries, including the US, have benefited, that has laid the foundation for the development of the global economy. It is under this globalized economic system that the current global industry and supply chains have been continuously optimized for the common development of all countries.

Through its coercive tariffs, the US administration is not just trying to bully the entire world in a bid to preen the US' alpha male primacy, but also seeking to disrupt and distort the global industry and supply chains to give an anabolic steroid-type boost to its economic muscles. If the entire world caves in to the tariffs, the global economic system under the framework of the WTO will crumble, and there will be a free-for-all scramble to take advantage of the weaker.

To defend globalization that is underpinned by multilateralism and free trade, and to safeguard the world order under the framework of the United Nations, countries must make a decisive effort to uphold an interconnected and interdependent global economy in the face of the US administration's demented demolition derby. By standing united against the US administration's smash-and-grab actions that take a wrecking ball to the previously negotiated deals that have been underpinned by the principles of fair trade, economies can collectively reaffirm their commitment to fostering an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and development.

The US too can be a constructive contributor to this or can continue to behave like a bitter and angry man shaking his fist at a world he no longer understands.

## Shortsighted bid to 'restore' dominance

While countries are reacting to the United States' tariff war, they should be aware that an executive order US President Donald Trump signed on Wednesday might have more immediate, grave and far-reaching impacts on them.

The executive order, ostensibly intended to "restore American maritime dominance", calls for a Maritime Action Plan to revitalize the US' maritime industries. But its real focus is on China.

The order directs the US Trade Representative to make recommendations regarding countering what it alleges are China's "anticompetitive" actions within the shipbuilding industry.

It also directs the US government to work with the US' allies and partners to align trade policies with the aim of squeezing China out of the international supply chain and logistics sectors.

And it directs the USTR to move ahead with a proposal that includes levying million-dollar US port docking fees on any ship that is part of a fleet that includes Chinese-built or Chinese-flagged vessels.

Currently, it is estimated that about 90 percent of the world's ships are subject to the fee. But as the World Shipping Council warned, about 98 percent of the world's ships will be subject to the fee when they call at US ports because the charge applies both to existing and future Chinese-built ships and to any carrier that has at least one Chinese-built ship on order.

However, eliminating China from the international supply chain and logistics sectors is purely wishful thinking.

Industries today are a result of the global industrial distribution of labor along complicated industry and supply chains that span the world and incorporate numerous countries and entities.

All these parties will be negatively affected by the US move that has already backfired in effect. For example Asian buyers, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, are reducing purchases of US agricultural products due to the US move, which has effectively shrunk the demand for US agricultural products. Traders revealed that the shortage of shipping capacity and the uncertainty caused by the trade war the US has launched against its trading partners are affecting purchases. Due to the influence of the executive order, some US soybean exporters have been unable to obtain soybean meal shipping quotes from shipping companies.

The strong opposition of US ports, shipping companies and commerce associations, as well as the trading companies and retailers that are related to these sectors should prompt the US administration to reconsider the wisdom of its push and shove.

That US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on Wednesday repeated his comments from Tuesday, saying that not all of the measures outlined by the agency's original proposal would be implemented, should be seen as a sign that the US administration also realizes how damaging the effects of the measures will be if carried out to the letter. The USTR is expected to make its final decision on remedies by the middle of the month.

Just like the adjustment of the "reciprocal tariff" policy it has been compelled to make in the process of implementation, the US administration is reportedly considering charging the port fees based on a ship's tonnage, rather than charging a uniform fee. This will allow small ships to pay lower fees, which is expected to help reduce the pressure on small ship owners in niche areas such as grain transportation, reducing the impacts on US farmers.

Sources admitted to the media that when the Office of the US Trade Representative formulated the relevant plan, it mainly considered large container ships that transport retail goods, and they did not fully consider the impact of "docking fees" on the flow of goods.

That's only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the US administration's lack of forethought in policymaking. It frequently has to do of patchwork in the process of implementing its ill-thought-out policies. While it brags that its policies will "Make America Great Again", all they really do is show how desperately low it will stoop to rob, steal or extort money from others.

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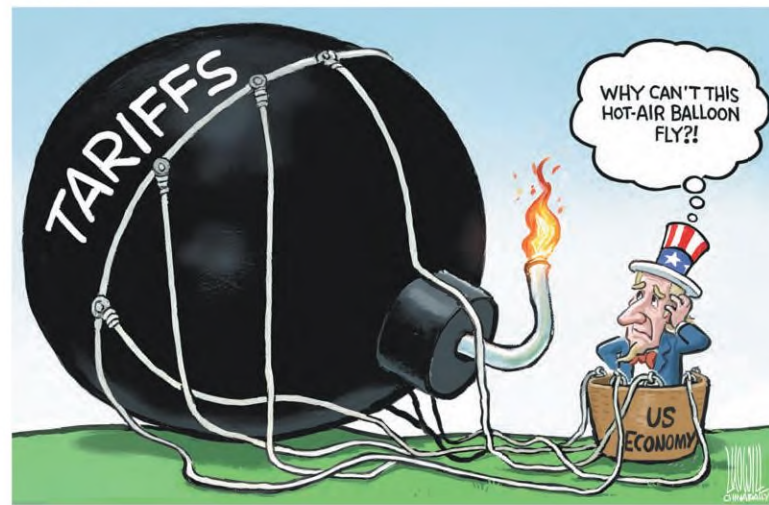
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Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## TikTok as the countdown to ban is extended again

While the US administration's decision to extend the deadline for its proposed ban on TikTok by another 75 days has temporarily spared its 170 million users in the United States from losing access to their much-loved app, it fails to address the fundamental absurdity of the ban itself. The US administration's crusade against TikTok, a platform embraced by small businesses, creators and ordinary citizens alike, has never been about national security as claimed. Instead, it reflects a disturbing willingness to sacrifice free-market principles and digital freedom at the altar of geopolitical posturing.

The timeline of this saga reveals Washington's political opportunism. In April 2024, then US president Joe Biden gave TikTok an ultimatum to either sell its US operations to a US company or face a ban by Jan 19, on the grounds that it has a Chinese parent company, ByteDance. Never mind the transparency TikTok exercises, including saving user data on domestic servers in the US and submitting itself to third-party audits.

When the current administration assumed office, it extended the deadline till April 5, only to push it again till mid-June. These extensions suggest even the architects of the ban recognize its impracticality, but refuse

to abandon the ban entirely.

The economic consequences of a TikTok ban would be immense. The app is not only an entertainment hub, but also a critical platform for small businesses, content creators, and independent artists. By TikTok's own estimates, a ban would cost small businesses in the US over \$1 billion in monthly revenue, while creators would lose nearly \$300 million in earnings.

Ironically, attempts by two successive administrations in the White House to ban TikTok because of its Chinese origins have only pushed users in droves toward Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, an app based in China, run by a Chinese company fully under Chinese law and appealing mainly to Chinese users. The exodus began when the earlier deadline on a ban was looming in January.

If the US government's goal was to reduce Chinese influence over digital habits among US citizens, clearly its high-handed approach has backfired spectacularly.

China's response has been measured but firm. The Ministry of Commerce has rightly pointed out that the forced sale of TikTok violates the very market principles the US claims to champion. "We oppose actions that violate market principles, forc-

bly seize assets, or harm legitimate corporate interests," a ministry spokesperson stated on Wednesday, adding that any technology transfer must comply with Chinese law. The hypocrisy is glaring, as the US, which has long portrayed itself as the global guardian of free enterprise, is now resorting to strong-arm tactics more befitting of the protectionist regimes it routinely criticizes.

The extension to mid-June offers TikTok a brief reprieve, but it doesn't solve the underlying issue. The US government must realize that banning TikTok would be an act of economic self-sabotage, a blow to free expression, and a gift to the very adversaries it seeks to counter. If Washington truly cares about national security, it should focus on crafting coherent, evidence-based regulations for all social media platforms so as to curb the deluge of misinformation, instead of scapegoating one app based on its country of origin.

The clock is ticking. The next 75 days should be used not to prolong this misguided policy, but to abandon it altogether. Will the US uphold its professed values, or will it continue down a path of digital protectionism that benefits no one?

The whole world is watching.

—ZHANG ZHOXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Changes are opportunities for the well-prepared

Since 2012, China has been promoting comprehensive and in-depth reform, maintaining economic stability with macroeconomic policies, eliminating risks with systematic reforms, adjusting its economic structure and promoting innovative development. This reform process has been shaped by a top-level design and it is the process of constantly forming a new development pattern.

Whether it is the country's neighborhood diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, or the development model of internal and external dual circulation or the emphasis on cultivating endogenous motivation and independent innovation, they all show the Chinese decision-makers have foreseen the risks and uncertainties that might arise in the external growth environment. After the United States launched a trade war against China in 2018 and began to try and "choke" China in key areas, China began to prepare for enforced "decoupling" from the US and, unlike most countries, actively address the risks of potential deglobalization.

Although changes in the external environment have brought difficulties, the Chinese economy still retains multiple strengths, strong resilience, and immense potential. As external shocks exert more pressure on the smooth operation of the economy, China should be well prepared to address all uncertainties by ensuring effective economic work in the second quarter and beyond. That was the core message delivered at a symposium of economists and entrepreneurs presided over by Premier Li Qiang in Beijing on Wednesday.

As the premier noted, despite this year's relatively special situation, the country is calmly and steadfastly responding to various risks and challenges, and it has maintained sustained economic recovery and

growth in the first quarter.

To that end, it is necessary to implement more proactive macro policies and introduce new incremental policies in a timely manner in light of the needs of the situation, so that the country can respond to uncertainties in the external environment with strong and effective policies.

Governments at various levels should take concrete measures to help enterprises, especially those affected by the tariff war between China and the US, to overcome their difficulties with a stronger sense of urgency, as enterprises are crucial to expanding domestic demand and stimulating the vitality of all business entities. Meanwhile, enterprises should proactively strive to adapt to the evolving circumstances by stabilizing their supply chains.

They should remain confident in the resilience and potential of the Chinese economy that are unique to its structure, size and special role in global trade and the world economy, as well as the Chinese policymakers' ability to roll out effective policies to help them weather the storm.

Thanks to its efforts to prevent and control systemic risks over the past decade, China has maintained the stability and sustainability of its financial system, real estate market, local debt and other fields, laying a solid foundation for coping with the latest external shock wave.

More importantly it has carried out a series of institutional and mechanism reforms around scientific and technological innovation, promoted the continuous upgrading of industries, and played an important role in the development of new industries such as global new energy, electric vehicles, drones, and robots. Enterprises should leverage this by increasing their input in research and development.

China is seeking to achieve "self-reli-

ance and self-improvement" in a series of key industries through a new national system combined with market innovation to ensure the security of the industry and supply chains, and has built the world's most complete, efficient and innovative industrial system and manufacturing industry chain.

The US' "reciprocal tariff" policy seeks to destroy the global industrial division of labor and reorganize global industry chains. But this will only further highlight the advantages of China's relatively stable industry chains.

China continues to optimize its export structure, increase overseas investment and promote domestic demand as the main driving forces and stable anchors for economic growth. China's current account surplus has dropped from about 10 percent of GDP at its highest in 2007 to about 2 percent at present, indicating the country has broken away from its dependence on exports. China's exports of goods to the US accounted for 19.23 percent of the total export value in 2018, and it was about 12 percent in 2024.

And the proportion of labor-intensive products in its exports has decreased significantly, while the proportion of electromechanical equipment has increased significantly. Therefore, although the tariff policy will have some impact on China's trade, the resilience of the Chinese economy has been greatly enhanced due to its improved competitiveness and the diversification of export destinations.

From a strategic point of view, the Chinese economy has solid economic resilience and emerging innovation momentum. As long as all sectors of society work together and build consensus to move forward, the reorganization of the global order may become a historical development opportunity for China.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | US Tariffs

**Editor's note:** The US tariff escalation threat against China and other countries compounds its mistake and further exposes its nature of blackmail. China will resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its rights and interests and maintain a normal international trade order. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

John Milligan-Whyte

## Tariffs make US an isolated trade island

US President Donald Trump's tariff policy is a tragic mistake for the United States as well as the rest of the world. It will undermine stabilizing international policies, raise the cost of goods for US consumers and businesses, and diminish US influence in economic globalization.

By aggressively pushing forward the "America First" strategy and slapping additional tariffs on imports from almost all countries, thus causing damage to the US and other economies, the US administration is turning the US into an unattractive trade and investment partner, and isolating the country from the global economy.

As other countries adapt to the US' tariffs by forging new trade networks, the US could become an isolated "trade island" adrift in a rapidly changing global economy.

The US' role in the global economic order is at an inflection point. The US administration's policies are replacing the US-led 20th century international economic order with a new Europe- and Asia-led economic and geopolitical order. The tariff policy is a catastrophic move for the US, as it is breaking global supply chains, destroying the US' economic leadership, and weakening US-led alliances.

Domestically, the US' tariffs will have destructive effects on US consumers



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and businesses, by raising inflation, and worsening the condition of the poor living paycheck to paycheck and the middle class.

The US administration's belligerent move will increase the production costs of American businesses that rely on imported materials — who will pass down the increasing costs to consumers — and cause job losses and unemployment rather than, as the administration claims, create jobs in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Some rich US investors and US companies may benefit from reduced foreign competition in the short term, but the overall impact of the tariffs on the US businesses and consumers will be devastating and long-lasting.

The US administration's aggressive tariff policies will have an impact far beyond immediate economic disruptions. By undermining the viability of economic globalization, which has helped lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, fostered worldwide interconnected supply chains, and ben-

efited many countries, the US administration is eliminating decades of progress in human development and international trade.

The US administration says the aggressive tariff policies will protect US industries and reduce what it claims to be unfair trade practices. But, in effect, it is invalidating the US' leadership in global trade.

The US leader says tariffs are necessary to protect US industries and reduce trade deficits, but, in reality, the tariffs will increase the country's trade deficits and destabilize the US economy.

The US has shaped global economic policies, which in turn fostered cooperation. The US administration's tariff policy and "America First" strategy will cripple America's role in the global trade system and alienate its allies.

European Union leaders have described the tariffs as a blow to transatlantic cooperation and betrayal of US allies. By imposing tariffs on allies such as the EU and Canada while exempting Russia in specific cases, the US administration has widened the rift with the US' key partners.

As trust between the US and its allies diminishes, divisions within Western economic and national security coalitions are inevitable. French President Emmanuel Macron has already proposed that the EU halt investments in the US, reflecting the EU's growing

frustration with the US' hostile policies.

Strained relations have long-term implications. With country-country trust collapsing, the US' allies have to strengthen their trade ties independent of the US, which in turn will pave the way for China to provide innovative and reliable leadership in international trade.

Many countries have announced retaliatory tariffs on US goods, with EU leaders being particularly critical of the US' approach because it undermines decades of cooperation. At a time when global markets are still grappling with post-pandemic challenges, inflation and supply chain disruptions, the US' tariffs have exacerbated their problems and complicated supply chain issues, which could trigger a global recession. Economists have been issuing warnings that such instability will deal a severe blow to both developing and developed economies.

Amid the global mayhem caused by the US' trade war, the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative provides a constructive 21st century framework for international economic cooperation. Countries across the world should seize the opportunities offered by the initiative and build new, constructive and mutually beneficial trade relations.

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

Zhang Xifeng

## Washington disrupting global trade system

China has filed a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism following the US decision to raise the "reciprocal tariffs", the Chinese Ministry of Commerce announced on Wednesday.

What's worse, on the same day US President Donald Trump raised the additional tariffs to 125 percent, hours after China took a countermeasure of an additional 84 percent duties on American goods.

The world is undergoing unprecedented changes, marked by a shift in the global power structure and a full-scale rewriting of international rules. The US has been ignoring established norms and making a mockery of the rule of law.

Discriminatory trade laws and unilateral sanctions, for some countries, have become the order of the day, pushing global legal frameworks into a crisis. The surge in trade disputes, compounded by the paralysis of the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body, has led many countries to bypass multilateral solutions in favor of retaliatory actions.

The rise of unilateral, discriminatory trade measures has intensified disputes between countries, turning global trade from a cooperative effort into a zero-sum game. The very foundation of the global trading system is crumbling because international relations are no longer anchored by rules or legal frameworks. In such a situation, the global trade system is bound to collapse, dragging the world into a potential disaster.

Global trade isn't only about the exchange of goods; it's the "engine" driving global economic growth and the "ballast" preventing the ship of global peace from capsizing. But this engine runs on rules, rules that guarantee fairness, transparency and predictability.

After the end of World War II, the United States and other developed countries devised the global trade system, laying special emphasis on multilateralism. As the chief architect of the postwar multilateral order and a founding member of the WTO, the US has led the charge in promoting these trade rules. Yet today the US seems to have consigned the very spirit of multilateralism that it helped build to the trash can. Instead of leading by example, the US is increasingly undermining the system it once championed.

The struggle for global economic dominance has turned into a contest over the rules that govern global trade. In this new "rules war", the US has been using "national security" as a pretext to impose trade and investment restrictions on China, including sanctions on semiconductor exports. In its latest move, the US administration has violated the WTO's most-favored-nation principle and slapped massive additional tariffs on Chinese goods on the pretext of safeguarding "national security" and protecting the interests of American industries.

This brazen violation of international law has put international trade relations in peril, making it clear the US, instead of being a champion of the rules-based world order, has become a disrupter of global trade and violator of international rules.

China's efforts to reshape the global trade system is not aimed at dismantling the existing global trade framework; they are meant to breathe new life into multilateralism, and reform the WTO to make it fairer, and more equitable and representative. China wants to engage in rule-making to ensure global trade rules reflect the changing international landscape and align with the world's highest standards, exemplified by agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

China is stepping up to the plate with a clear goal: to build a global trade system that is open, fair and cooperative in nature. It is committed to promoting a model of shared opportunities, advocating trade and investment liberalization, and creating a level playing field where every country can thrive.

As part of this reshaping process, China aims to secure a seat at the table to discuss the future of global trade, and have a say in global economic affairs commensurate with its growing economic power and influence. The global trade rules need to be upgraded to reflect the global economic reality of today, and China is determined to be at the center of that evolution. This means pushing for a greater role in setting the global economic governance agenda.

As for the WTO, it is more than just a trade body; it is the upholder of multilateralism. The rules-based WTO has been a crucial force fostering global economic cooperation, which China firmly supports. China has been calling for the revival of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism to ensure the global trade system is fair and balanced. The "Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement", an alternative system for resolving WTO disputes and a temporary solution to the WTO dispute settlement crisis, which China established in cooperation with the European Union, is just one example of China's proactive role in promoting multilateralism.

The WTO must be reinvigorated, and global trade should once again be governed by law. Trade should be a pillar for the development and future prosperity of all our people. If we are to navigate the tumultuous waters of global economic uncertainty and achieve common prosperity, the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, will be our most important anchor.

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



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Kimihiko Fukuyama

## Asia-Pacific must chart its own course

The specter of geopolitical instability, once part of a distant academic discourse, has become a tangible reality for businesses worldwide. Eight years ago, a seismic shift occurred when the United States, under then president Donald Trump, signaled a retreat from its traditional role as a global economic and security guarantor.

The echoes of that promise, "America First", resonate even more powerfully now as US voters have again chosen Trump as their president and supported the Republican Party in the elections. As a result, the Republicans dominate both the Senate and the House of Representatives, reinforcing the perception that reliance on US engagement is a precarious strategy for the global economy.

This resurgence of economic nationalism in the US necessitates a fundamental reassessment of regional economic strategies. The message "don't count on US" is a clear signal which both Trump and Vice-President JD Vance sent during the election campaign. In fact, they have been repeating the message even after assuming power.

As such, "don't count on US" is no longer a mere cautionary note; it is a stark imperative. Businesses and policymakers alike must acknowledge the shifting sands of global power dynamics and adapt to them accordingly.

In anticipation of this potential vacuum, regional actors have been trying to create alternative paths. Some of the Asia-Pacific countries have prepared for such a US policy pivot. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, which includes China, the Republic of Korea and Japan and is a sprawling trade agreement encompassing 15 Asia-Pacific countries, stands as a testament to this strategic foresight.

"We have prepared RCEP" signifies the collective recognition that regional prosperity hinges on intra-regional cooperation, not external dependence. The RCEP represents a paradigm shift, prioritizing the deepening of economic ties among member states.

The concept of "regional partnership" is central to this new paradigm. It underscores the importance of fostering collaborative frameworks that transcend traditional bilateral relationships. This entails building resilient supply chains, harmonizing regulatory standards, and promoting investment flows within the region. It is aimed at creating a self-sustaining economic ecosystem, less vulnerable to the vagaries of external political cur-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



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rents, especially caused by the US.

The potential to "boost regional economic ties" is immense. The RCEP, with its vast market access and streamlined trade rules, can unlock opportunities for businesses across diverse sectors. Small and medium-sized enterprises, often the backbone of regional economies, stand to significantly benefit from reduced trade barriers and enhanced market access.

Furthermore, the RCEP can stimulate investment in infrastructure development, technological innovation and human capital, laying the foundation for long-term economic growth.

China is also well prepared to deal with the situation created by the US' tariffs by strengthening its "dual circulation development paradigm" (which allows the domestic and overseas markets to reinforce each other, with the domestic market as the mainstay) and exploring new markets by extending the Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, China has been successfully shifting from being the "world's factory" to

becoming an intellectual property rights economy.

But the path forward is not without challenges. Effectively implementing the RCEP requires sustained political will and a commitment to ending the lingering trade frictions. RCEP member states should deepen collaboration to overcome the regulatory hurdles, streamline customs procedures, and ensure fair competition. Also, the region must remain vigilant against protectionist tendencies and strive to maintain an open and inclusive trading environment.

Beyond the RCEP, other regional initiatives, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, also play a crucial role in shaping the future of Asia-Pacific trade. These agreements, while different in scope and membership, share a common objective: to foster deeper economic integration and promote sustainable development.

Moreover, the strategic implications of a less-engaged US go beyond economics. Security concerns, particularly in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula, demand more robust regional security architecture. The Asia-Pacific region must cultivate its own mechanisms for conflict resolution and security cooperation, reducing its reliance on US help and mediation.

The US firmly told the European

Union that Washington will no longer bear the lion's share for NATO's security, asked the EU to manage NATO and European security issues on their own, and not count on the US anymore. The US' message is crystal clear: The EU has achieved economic integration, so the EU alone has to maintain the bloc's security mechanism, because the US wants to focus on addressing its own matters.

Such behavior was pretty common in the US before World War II. They have decided they resort to their original way of thinking.

In conclusion, the Asia-Pacific region must chart its own course. The resurgence of the US' tariff policy, coupled with the potential for diminished American engagement, underscores the urgency of strengthening regional partnerships and deepening economic ties. The RCEP, as a cornerstone of this strategy, offers a promising path toward a more resilient and prosperous future.

While challenges remain, the collective determination to "boost regional economic ties" provides a powerful antidote to the uncertainties of a changing global landscape. The era of the US' unquestioned economic leadership is waning as the era of regional self-reliance is dawning.

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## 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.

LI XING AND JOHN PANG

## Anchor of stability

The 'ASEAN Way' prioritizes a non-confrontational method for addressing issues that can be foundational for the making of a peaceful multipolar world

This May, alongside the 46th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur will bring the Association of South-east Asian Nations, Gulf Cooperation Council and China together for the inaugural ASEAN-China-GCC summit. This will be one of the



Li Xing

most important events of this year, aiming to enhance trilateral cooperation among the three key geopolitical and economic blocs and foster deeper ties among the participating regions.



John Pang

Facing the geopolitical pressure driven by China-US rivalry, ASEAN has made it clear that it does not want to pick sides in the competition between major countries. It is striving to balance relations with the two powers while emphasizing dialogue, diplomacy, economic cooperation, regional integration and stability. In dealing with any emerging crisis within a member state or inter-state conflicts among member states, ASEAN's problem-solving approach is consensus, non-interference and quiet diplomacy. Unlike the West's confrontational value-based approach to any internal or external conflict, ASEAN's problem-solving approach enables member states to resolve disputes peacefully while maintaining unity and fostering cooperation. This characteristic approach is identified as the unique "ASEAN Way".

The concept of the "ASEAN Way"

refers to a conflict-resolution approach that aligns with the cultural-historical norms of Southeast Asia. It is regarded as an effective tool for managing disputes through informal and personal diplomacy. Policymakers rely on compromise, consensus and consultation, ensuring that decisions are made collectively without direct confrontation. Above all, this approach prioritizes a non-confrontational, consensus-driven method for addressing issues. Quiet diplomacy allows ASEAN leaders to engage in discussions privately, preventing public scrutiny and avoiding situations that could escalate tensions or cause embarrassment among member states.

The multipolar world is coming as rapidly as the old order is fragmenting. The world has begun to see bridges built across disparate multilateral mechanisms such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the African Union, the GCC and ASEAN. Today, ASEAN has emerged as a key global player. Several ASEAN countries have shown interest in joining or aligning with BRICS. In January, Indonesia was formally admitted as a new BRICS member, while Thailand was granted partner country status. Vietnam, though not yet a BRICS member, has demonstrated growing interest in collaborating with the group. Singapore, another ASEAN nation, remains outside BRICS but maintains robust economic ties with key BRICS members, particularly China and India. Malaysia has expressed a willingness to cooperate with BRICS, particularly as it seeks to bridge BRICS with ASEAN and to enhance trade and investment ties with non-Western economies.

A multipolar world is taking shape organically. The "Collective

West", until recently so triumphant, has to share the stage. The post-Cold War globalization led by the United States is coming to an end, and the world is re-globalizing with new relationships and institutions and rising powers.

In 2023, ASEAN held its first summit with the GCC, comprising Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, weeks after war broke out again in the Middle East. The combined GDP of ASEAN and the GCC is nearly \$6 trillion, with \$110 billion in trade volume. While both are open blocs committed to neutrality and good relations with both the West and its designated adversaries, both clearly feel the need to broaden their partnerships and find new avenues of cooperation beyond the zero-sum framework of contemporary Western international relations.

This year's ASEAN meetings, chaired by Malaysia, come at a turning point in the transition to a multipolar world order, amid sanctions, trade warfare, export restrictions, war and the threat of widening war. In Donald Trump's second term, the US has made a historic ideological break with liberal internationalism and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has conceded that unipolarity is over.

For ASEAN, it is important to broaden its multilateralism and to avoid entrapment in a framework of aggressive alliances such as Quad and AUKUS that would inevitably destroy the peace and security of the region and ride roughshod over its treasured "ASEAN centrality". ASEAN prioritizes trade, economic development and regional integration over becoming entangled in the US obsession to contain China. The likelihood of a "Gulf-Southeast

Asia convergence" is growing stronger as a pole of Asian strategic autonomy in reshaping trade patterns, diplomatic alliances and security frameworks for a multipolar world.

The Global South can unite easily because its members already have much in common and uphold a largely shared set of values, explicit or implicit, about how states should relate to each other. They treat each other as equals and respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity hard-won through struggles against colonialism and Western aggression. ASEAN practices these principles as the "ASEAN Way", an open regionalism that favors consensual, socially dense processes of decision-making while disavowing security alliances against third parties.

The "ASEAN Way" and China's "neighbor as priority" share several similarities. The Chinese "neighbor as priority" is a diplomatic strategy aimed at building stable and cooperative relations with neighboring countries, particularly ASEAN countries. This policy is rooted in economic engagement, security cooperation and cultural ties, with a strong emphasis on regional stability and mutual benefits. Both approaches reflect a desire to promote cooperation and harmony within the region while avoiding conflict and external interference. A key pillar of this relationship is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement, which further solidifies China-ASEAN economic integration.

China's trade with ASEAN has experienced significant growth over the years. Between 2004 and 2023, the bilateral trade volume grew at an average annual rate of 11 per-



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cent, surging from around \$120.6 billion to \$911.7 billion. This growth rate was 3 percentage points higher than China's overall foreign trade growth during the same period. As a result, ASEAN's share of China's total foreign trade increased from 9.2 percent in 2004 to 15.4 percent in 2023. In comparison, by 2024, the total goods trade between the US and ASEAN was estimated at \$476.8 billion.

China and ASEAN regularly engage through summits, dialogues and forums, including the ASEAN-China Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Despite ongoing disputes in the South China Sea, both sides remain committed to negotiating a Code of Conduct to address tensions peacefully. Additionally, initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, scholarships and cultural exchange programs are fostering stronger connections and mutual understanding between China and ASEAN.

It is not by accident that China

and ASEAN have this overlapping consensus. Despite its Cold War origin, ASEAN consciously inherited the foundational ideals of the Bandung Conference — most notably, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence — as a guiding framework for regional diplomacy. They represent the shared values of the Global South. Together, China and ASEAN are anchoring in Asia the making of a multipolar world through peaceful multilateralism.

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JIN JUNDA

## Damage control

As the US scales back its commitments to global governance, other countries should develop consultation mechanisms to construct a new framework

Since Donald Trump returned to the White House, his administration has scaled back the United States' commitments to global governance — withdrawing from the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, scrutinizing foreign aid



Jin Junda

programs and criticizing international organizations such as the United Nations.

It is in the interests of most countries to make up the global governance deficit left by the Trump administration. However, the divergent positions and interests of countries, as well as the setbacks in reforming the global governance framework have undermined confidence in global governance. It is thus imperative to build a global governance framework that ensures the fair distribution of power and responsibilities while encouraging nations to actively engage in global affairs.

The current global governance system is dominated by a few major powers, and it has even become a political tool for these nations. Cooperation and reform are being neglected.

This is reflected in several ways. First, major powers control the financing of the global governance framework and exert a dominant influence on policymaking.

Second, Europe and the US wield excessive power within the framework and can unilaterally paralyze governance mechanisms and manipulate staffing.

Third, the tenets of the mainstream global governance frameworks are largely based on Western-centric political and economic theories. Some initiatives that aim to transplant the "universal values" and "universal systems" to developing countries failed to achieve desired results, or even led to disastrous outcomes.

Fourth, Europe and the US regard the global governance framework they lead as their "spheres of influence", excluding other countries from involvement

and rejecting dialogue.

The root cause of the problem lies in the fact that the existing global governance framework fails to reflect the evolving trends in international relations. At the time when institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WHO were established, developed countries led by the US dominated the global governance system and provided the material support necessary for its operation.

This "one superpower+several major powers" structure that characterized the Western bloc during the Cold War and the post-Cold War global order achieved a balance between power and responsibility, thus maintaining stability over a long period. However, the current international order is becoming increasingly multipolar, and the political and economic clout of developing countries is rising.

But reform of the global governance framework has made little progress, resulting in an uneven distribution of power and responsibilities. Global governance requires developing countries to take on more responsibilities, but their voice and decision-making power are still limited.

The essence of a balance of power and responsibility is that the benefits a country can reap from its participation in global governance are commensurate with its costs. Since the interests and demands of each country vary, allocating power within the governance framework is an important way to ensure that member states benefit.

A positive example is the United Nations Security Council, where the principle of "unanimity among major powers" helps avoid direct conflicts between nuclear-armed states, and makes permanent mem-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

bers willing to stay in and support the framework. The support of major powers for the UN Security Council is essential for other countries to engage in cooperation.

But in some other global governance mechanisms, there are significant disagreements between the major powers and emerging economies that obstruct cooperation and lead to a lose-lose scenario. Developed countries such as the US, perceiving the costs in engaging in global governance to outweigh the benefits, have increasingly turned to unilateralism or "mini-multilateral" approaches to tackle global challenges. Meanwhile, emerging economies' enthusiasm for taking

part in global affairs has waned, as their calls for reforming the governance system remain unaddressed.

The problem with the current global governance system is that countries seeking to preserve the status quo and those advocating reform have similar global influence, leading to an impasse in the reform of global governance. However, as global challenges continue to intensify, they may create new opportunities to drive meaningful reform in the global governance system.

Global governance is increasingly becoming a core national interest for countries significantly affected by global challenges, and they want

to devote more resources and assume greater responsibility. Major powers, including China, Europe, Russia, Japan and India, should support these countries in participating in — and even leading — global governance efforts.

At present, global policymakers need to prioritize urgent issues that directly affect the interests of all countries, or issues where there is a "power vacuum" and most countries seek to expand their influence to facilitate dialogue between the Global North and the Global South.

As the US scales back its commitments to global governance, China, Europe, Japan, other emerging economies and key regional countries should explore areas where results can be achieved quickly through bilateral and multilateral engagement, such as negotiations over hotspot issues, humanitarian interventions, technology ethics, and digital sovereignty. On this basis, they should develop permanent consultation mechanisms to construct a new governance framework or build consensus to reform the existing global governance framework.

An important principle in the selection of global issues is "unanimity among major powers". Major powers dominate the technology, capital and political influence necessary for global governance, and they are the key to the stability of governance frameworks. Without a consensus among major powers or where there is a serious conflict of interest between them, it is not possible to resolve a global issue through dialogue.

But even in areas lacking "major power consensus", countries can address the unfair distribution of responsibilities and powers and provide institutional support to nations willing to contribute resources and efforts to global gov-

ernance through several ways.

The first is multi-level governance; when certain countries or organizations take the initiative to engage in unilateral or regional governance on key issues of concern, major powers and international organizations can communicate with them and offer diplomatic, technical, and financial support.

The second is to establish open international cooperation frameworks, such as the "BRICS+" and "ASEAN+3" mechanisms. These institutional arrangements can accommodate countries that are unable to join the governance framework but are willing to engage in limited cooperation.

The third way is the coexistence of multiple frameworks led by the Global South. In areas where large deficits exist, such as economic development, there is room for the coexistence of cooperative initiatives and private investments from China, the US, Europe, Russia, Japan, India and other countries.

China should call for the Global South to issue a joint declaration opposing exclusive cooperation and encouraging the coexistence of major powers. In areas where the US is willing to invest resources and engage in equal dialogue with other stakeholders, other major powers and international organizations can work with it.

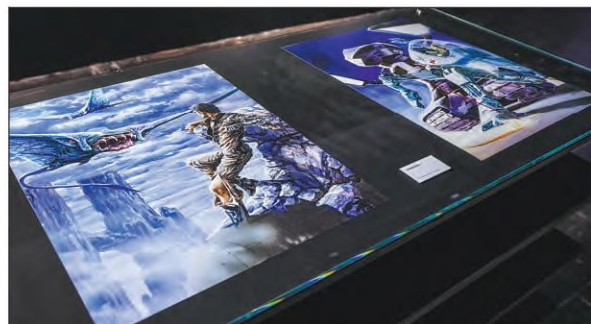
Anti-globalization and populist sentiment are rising across the world, and a number of major countries are increasingly turning to unilateral diplomacy, which dampen the enthusiasm for countries to join global governance. Therefore, major countries need to quickly identify issues where there is consensus and progress can be made, and help those countries that want to take part in global governance to do so.

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# LIFE



Collectible cards for domestic blockbusters on display. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Conceptual art for James Cameron's 1978 short film *Xenogenesis*.



A section featuring the Lumiere Brothers, French pioneers in the development of modern cinema.

## Drawing back the curtains

Exhibition in Beijing allows fans to take a peek at the magic behind the silver screen, **Xu Fan** reports.

Over his decades-long career, Zhang Yimou — one of China's most prestigious directors — has experienced many triumphs, from accepting awards at international film festivals, to helming the opening and closing ceremonies of two Olympic Games.

Yet while these grand achievements define his public legacy, it's probably the smaller moments that will resonate most deeply.

Film enthusiasts can now catch a more personal glimpse of Zhang at *Where Dreams Were Created*, an exhibition that explores the behind-the-scenes art of cinema, and the largest of its kind in the country.

Near the entrance, a yellowed letter rests behind the display glass. Written on stationery from the Scarlet Bird Hotel — likely in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, based on the telephone number — it captures a simple but heartfelt moment: Zhang missing his mother's home cooking.

In the note, the director asks his mother to bring him some pickles or cold tossed vegetables. Knowing his unpredictable schedule might make him hard to reach, he suggests that his younger brother leave the food at the front desk for Room 311 if he can't be reached by phone.

The exhibition, which held its first edition in Shanghai last year, consists of six sections, varying from a retrospective of milestone moments in cinema history, to showcasing the art of filmmaking behind the scenes.

During the opening ceremony in Beijing on April 3, organizers invited several film industry veterans, including art director Cao Jiuping, who collaborated with Zhang on 11 movies.

"Zhang's letter from the Scarlet Bird Hotel was likely written during his involvement in script discussions for *To Live*. It was the early summer of 1993. He was quite busy, working over 10 hours a day ... he probably didn't even have time to meet his younger brother, who brought the food," Cao tells China Daily.

Cao also shared an anecdote behind Zhang's Golden Bear award at the 38th Berlin International Film Festival for *Red Sorghum*, a film starring Gong Li that was adapted from two novellas by Nobel laureate Mo Yan.

In 1988, overseas trips were still a rare opportunity for most Chinese. Europe was still divided into East



Two visitors admire sketches from *Little Jam and the Goblin Opp*, a 17-minute Japanese animated short film.



A visitor takes a photo of sketches from the Japanese film.



A section displaying art from *Little Jam and the Goblin Opp*.



A poster for the 1979 movie *Ne zha Conquers the Dragon King*.

and West by the Iron Curtain, and Berlin was a city of two halves. Zhang — who didn't expect to win such a major honor — changed some money and decided to take the opportunity to go shopping in East Berlin shortly before the award ceremony but received a notification from the Chinese Embassy in West Berlin, telling him to return to the festival as soon as possible.

"Zhang suspected that he might have won an award, but he never imagined it would be such a major triumph," recalls Cao, adding that it

was the first time a Chinese-language film had won a top honor at one of Europe's most prestigious international film festivals.

"One of the biggest impacts of the Golden Bear award was that from then on, Zhang barely had to worry about funding for his films. Investors lined up to fill his schedule, the kind of treatment most film directors can only dream of," says Cao.

Cheng Hao, a Beijing-based collector and sponsor of celebrity handwriting exhibitions, says that there is a special section paying tribute to the

American Film Institute's 1999 list of the 25 greatest actresses in Hollywood. Among rare artifacts on display are handwritten notes and autographs from giants like Rita Hayworth and Jean Harlow, the first time these items have been exhibited in China.

"Each one is like a time capsule, preserving the essence of cinematic history," says Cheng.

Riding on the success of *Ne zha 2*, the exhibition includes a special section featuring the cinematic evolution of the titular character, a household deity whose story has been retold in Chinese films and TV series, among

them the 1979 animated feature *Ne zha Conquers the Dragon King*.

Zhang Boshi, who curated the exhibition, says it was put together over the course of four months.

As this year marks the 130th anniversary of the birth of cinema, there is also a section dedicated to the contributions of France's Lumiere Brothers, Auguste and Louis, who are regarded as the inventors of cinema.

"From the very beginning of cinema to some of the most important moments in film history, the exhibition seeks to take visitors behind the

scenes — revealing how some of the greatest movies were made, and what inspired the most famous filmmakers. It's our way of celebrating all the hard work and passion that goes into the art of cinema," he says.

For instance, one area has the conceptual art and storyboard sketches from James Cameron's 1978 sci-fi short film *Xenogenesis* — his debut film, which laid the foundation for the Hollywood legend's later blockbusters like *The Terminator* and *Avatar*. Zhang Boshi says that the items from *Xenogenesis* are replicas, produced with authorization from one of Cameron's overseas copyright holders.

Just a few steps away, an area filled with a childlike atmosphere is dedicated to paintings and storyboard sketches from *Little Jam and the Goblin Opp*, a 17-minute Japanese short anime, which also commemorates the tragic death of a talented animator.

The movie, directed by then 73-year-old Toshiyuki Honda, is adapted from a picture book by Honda's former colleague, Yoshiji Kigami, who died in the 2019 arson attack on Kyoto Animation Studio — an incident that claimed 36 lives and injured an additional 34 people, including the suspect.

Recalling his trip to visit Honda's studio, Zhang Boshi says he was surprised to find that it was a small house where animators — mostly in their 60s or 70s — worked closely together in a crowded, yet focused environment.

"The hand-painted sketches were stored in many archival packages, just piled up. I felt like I was entering a treasure trove, dazzled, and at a loss as to how to choose," Zhang Boshi says.

Aside from the exhibits, there's a screening area showing award-winning short projects by Chinese directors on weekdays, and a German film each Saturday.

Sponsored by Germany's national airline Lufthansa, seven classic German films have been selected — from 1927's *Metropolis* to 2023's *Rotter Himmel* (Afire) — to represent the century-long history of German cinema, which is known for its artistic expression and societal concerns.

The exhibition runs until June 3 at Beijing's 798 Art Zone.

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## Hebi cherry blossom viewing festival a blooming success

By CHENG YUEZHU  
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As the cherry blossoms bloom, the city of Hebi in Henan province offers visitors an annual festival dedicated to strolling through the drifting petals, past stalls selling local delicacies, with live music playing in the background.

This year, the 11th Hebi Cherry Blossom Festival hosted its opening ceremony on April 2. The festival, which will run until April 21, includes interactive experiences, performances and markets, as well as three business forums to discuss the integration of culture, technology and tourism.

According to Wang Junwei, deputy head of the Hebi Cherry Blossom Culture Association, the city has been associated with the flower since the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC). Cherry trees were planted at the imperial palace in Zhaoze, then the capital city, which is located in Qixian county.

"Since 2006, Hebi has been planting cherry trees on a large scale along Huaxia South Road in



Left: The 11th Hebi Cherry Blossom Festival attracts tourists to the city in Henan province. Right: The Huaxia South Road, which is around 4 kilometers in length and home to 17 cherry tree varieties, is a prime spot for blossom viewing. PHOTOS BY ZHANG BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



the city center. Now, there are more than 300,000 cherry trees in 87 different varieties in the city," Wang says.

As the blossoms became an annual attraction, the festival was launched in 2015. The road, which is around 4 kilometers in length with 17 cherry tree varieties,

was named "China's most beautiful cherry blossom avenue" in 2016 by the China Cherry Industry Association.

"When the first edition was held, it attracted tens of thousands of visitors, but after a decade of development, we registered 2.16 million visitors last year," Wang says.

The festival seeks to boost cultural tourism and economic development through cultural events, live performances, and interactive technological experiences.

This year's festival is placing a stronger emphasis on traditional aesthetics through a series of immersive experiences.

As they stroll through the cherry blossoms, visitors are encouraged to don *hanfu* (traditional attire) and enjoy live performances of traditional instruments such as the *guzheng* (a plucked zither) and the *pipa* (a four-string lute), and enjoy excerpts from Yuju Opera, a local tradition.

Apart from Chinese classical music and dance, a variety of performances are on offer, including an intangible Kazak cultural heritage dance form, pop performances, and a drum ensemble.

In addition to the blossoms, there are cultural markets, a recurring festival component, with handicraft stalls, street food, and regional specialties.

At the New Century Plaza, an installation space covering an area of around 300 square meters offers a virtual cherry blossom viewing experience. Digital projections bring to life the way ancient Chinese viewed the flower, as recorded in texts, and in a journey of cultural exploration and scientific education for children, illustrate the life cycle of the blossoms.

According to Wu Erchuan, chief director of the festival, this year marks a significant shift in the festival's organization, as the team has adopted a more market-oriented approach.

Shopping districts and e-commerce platforms have introduced discounts on accommodation, dining, entertainment and shopping, which can be used with government-issued consumer vouchers and corporate discount packages.

The organizers spent five months developing activities that promote traditional culture tailored to the tastes of the younger generations, as well as designing cultural merchandise related to cherry blossoms and regional culture.

"We've launched a range of creative cultural products based on the two mascots we designed last year, including dolls, cherry blossom-themed mugs, soaps and teas. We're also integrating these products with local agricultural goods to promote Hebi's farming industry," Wu says.

## LIFESHANGHAI

Amid the vibrant energy of AW2025 Shanghai Fashion Week's MODE exhibition, Ann McCreath, founder of Kenya's KikoRomeo, meticulously arranged her booth. The brand, founded in 1996 and celebrated for its African identity and eco-conscious designs, was bustling as buyers and enthusiasts flocked to explore her collection.

Known for its exquisite beadwork, sustainable fibers and unique weaving techniques, KikoRomeo participated in Paris Fashion Week and emerged as a rising force in Kenya's fashion scene. Shanghai Fashion Week was McCreath's first time showcasing in China.

"We've been curious about China because in Kenya there are so many Chinese companies developing things and constructing buildings, but we haven't had enough cultural exchange," says McCreath.

McCreath's fascination with China stems from her desire to connect with a market that has long been a driving force in global trade.

Observing Shanghai's fashion-savvy consumers, she notes: "When I look at consumers, everyone's got their own style. Although you have mass-market manufactured clothing, how people wear clothing shows their uniqueness."

For the Shanghai event, her goal is not only to link a bridge between Africa's rich cultural heritage and Asia's dynamic fashion market but also to showcase the value of African brands to the world through the biennial fashion week held from March 25 to April 1.

"We live that vision daily but when we go into other markets, they're often unaware of how Africa has changed and developed. We don't want to just export raw materials; we want to make them into value-added goods that can be appreciated globally," she expresses.

McCreath's participation is part of Africa Reimagined, a flagship project by Development Reimagined, an international development consultancy headquartered in Beijing. Africa Reimagined is a fashion showcase and a strategic platform driving industrial growth, job creation, and deeper trade relations between Africa, Asia and the global fashion ecosystem, says Hannah Wanjie Ryder, CEO of Development Reimagined.

"African luxury fashion deserves a space on the global stage. Shanghai Fashion Week presents a unique opportunity to turn that vision into reality," says Ryder. "This initiative is about building lasting commercial relationships, unlocking new growth opportunities in Asia, and reaching a worldwide audience eager for fresh perspectives on luxury."

At AW25, Africa Reimagined brought 22 leading designers from 12 African countries, each showcasing how African fashion blends culture, heritage and sustainability with modern luxury. The program included a trade show, panel discussions, and a runway show, aimed at expanding market access and



Left: South African designer Amza Niyonzima (right), founder of Masa Mara, brought his brand to the Shanghai Fashion Week. Right top: Mzukisi Mbane (left), of brand Imprint, presents his fashion line. Right above: Ann McCreath, founder of Kenya's KikoRomeo, enjoys a humorous moment.



## African fashion is more than just clothing

Designers showcase their talent, proving the continent has its place in luxury goods, global trade and cultural exchange, He Qi reports.



Africa Reimagined brought 22 leading designers from 12 African countries to the fashion week, showcasing how African fashion blends culture, heritage and sustainability with modern luxury. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

securing commercial opportunities.

"By participating in Shanghai Fashion Week, African brands are not just gaining exposure, they are positioning themselves as key players in the global fashion industry, expressing their willingness to diversify beyond their home markets to fashion capitals such as Paris and New York, and to expand into new markets across Asia and beyond," adds Ryder.

Among the participants was South African designer Amza Niyonzima, founder of Masa Mara, which weaves Rwandan symbolism into futuristic streetwear.

"We are here, we are the brave ones, we are the ones that believe our spirits should be shared throughout the world," declares Niyonzima, whose brand was awarded the 2017 NNUA Young African Fashion Innovative Award. "It's a great joy to be in Shanghai. It's our first time coming to China. We see so many similarities between African and Chinese cultures," Niyonzima adds.

South African couturier David Tale, whose avant-garde designs redefine African elegance, points out that African craftsmanship is exceptional, and the world is finally recognizing its influence in the luxury fashion industry. "Shanghai Fashion Week provides the perfect stage for African designers to prove that African design is not just relevant, but is essential to the future of global luxury fashion."

For Ryder, fashion is more than just clothing: It is a gateway to understanding different cultures and a hope to create more opportunities.

With two decades of experience in international development, Ryder highlights the program's role in fostering trade over aid. "China has that same perspective; it understands that development is rooted in investment and mutual growth," she states, adding that by entering China, African brands create jobs at home, particularly for women and girls, while diversifying global supply chains.

"This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and fashion helps make that connection tangible," she says. "Through this initiative, we aim to promote trade, investment, and meaningful engagement for African people."

Africa Reimagined's momentum extends beyond the event. Planners are already eyeing return trips in October 2025 and March 2026, with e-commerce partnerships and regional pop-ups in the pipeline.

For Niyonzima, the journey has just begun. "We've spoken to suppliers and buyers about collaborations. Shanghai isn't our last stop. It's our launchpad."

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## Traditional brands use technology to meet modern demand

By HE QI

In an era of abundant consumer choices, traditional Chinese fashion brands are redefining their market presence by blending heritage with innovation. At the recent Shanghai Fashion Week, two iconic labels — Threegun and EP Yaying — demonstrated how time-honored brands can thrive in the modern marketplace by balancing traditional style with contemporary appeal.

Threegun, a legacy brand founded in 1937 known for its cotton underwear, marked its 88th anniversary with a retro-themed showcase at Shanghai Fashion Week. The brand's theme Past, Present, and Future highlighted its evolution from functional intimates to versatile fashion essentials.

"We recognized a shift in consumer behavior where younger generations seek clothing that offers both inner comfort and outer style," says Chen Jiaorong, general manager of Shanghai Dragon Corporation, the parent company of Threegun.

To meet this demand, the brand leveraged advanced technologies, developing multifunctional materials such as moisture-wicking, antibacterial, and ultra-thin textiles. These innovations allow Threegun's garments to serve a dual purpose — foundational layers or stand-alone outerwear.

Chen acknowledges the challenges of merging tradition with trend-

iness, particularly in overcoming younger consumers' disinterest in conventional thermal wear and integrating online and offline retail strategies. However, Threegun turned these hurdles into opportunities by collaborating with aerospace research institutes to adapt space-grade fabric technologies for civilian use.

"These materials, designed for astronauts' high-metabolism environments, feature moisture management, antibacterial properties, and thermal regulation, qualities now being integrated into everyday apparel," Chen explains.

Cultural collaborations have also revitalized the brand. By partnering with institutions like the Palace Museum, the brand infuses traditional motifs into modern designs, creating pieces that resonate with both heritage and contemporary aesthetics.

Last month, an immersive pop-up exhibition on Huaihai Road in Shanghai showcased the brand's legacy and innovation through interactive experiences. "Through youthful marketing strategies, we forge an emotional bond between the brand and the next generation of consumers," Chen says.

According to Ni Guohua, chairman of Shanghai Dragon Corporation, expanding overseas is critical for the evolution of traditional brands. Since 2018, Threegun has established manufacturing hubs in



Left: Threegun, a legacy brand known for its cotton underwear, marked its 88th anniversary with a retro-themed showcase at Shanghai Fashion Week. Right: Established in 1988, EP Yaying made its fashion week debut with a new collection. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Africa and utilized cross-border e-commerce for online sales with strategic offline positioning in Asian, African and European markets, aligning with the Belt and Road Initiative.

"Our global approach combines Chinese research and development with local adaptation, catering to diverse preferences like the minimalist designs in Europe and breathable fabrics in Southeast Asia. With established sales networks, our next target is the Middle East," says Ni.

If Threegun's transformation



epitomizes the fusion of technology and textiles, then EP Yaying's evolution signifies its dedication to traditional aesthetics while seamlessly incorporating Western tailoring.

Established in 1988, EP Yaying made its Shanghai Fashion Week debut with a collection centered on "philosophy of balance." The show opened with a fusion of traditional Kunju Opera melodies with guitar music, symbolizing a cross-temporal dialogue between heritage and innovation.

"The clothing we design is not just about aesthetics but also harmoniz-

ing humans and nature, and awakening our inner energy," says Tian Ling, creative director of EP Yaying. The brand's designs incorporate intangible cultural heritage techniques such as Miao embroidery and batik alongside rare materials like yak wool to create garments rich with cultural depth.

The brand has also collaborated with artisans like Miao ethnic group's paper-cutting master Yang Jinqiu and Su embroidery (from Suzhou, Jiangsu province) inheritor Zou Yingzi to translate traditional crafts into contemporary fashion narra-

tives. "Our goal is to allow modern consumers to experience the profound heritage of Chinese culture through our designs," Tian adds.

The brand further explores cultural evolution with the exhibition *Time: Weaving Peony Dreams*, curated alongside renowned cinematic costume designer Huang Wei. The exhibition delves into the evolution of Chinese clothing from the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties to the present day, seamlessly blending traditional elements with modernity. It also features costumes co-created with the Palace Museum, highlighting intangible cultural heritage techniques such as Miao and Su embroideries.

"Each garment in the series co-created by Yaying and the Palace Museum encapsulates a moment in history, embodying the cultural essence of various dynasties and ethnic groups," Huang says.

The two brands exemplify how tradition can thrive in a competitive market by embracing technology and cultural heritage. Chen notes: "The rise of *guochao*, or Chinese fashion trends, with technological empowerment and global expansion, presents unprecedented opportunities for traditional brands."



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## LIFE

## The maker of miniature worlds

Hakka bamboo artisan carves space for ancient art in modern life, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

The slender bamboo panel almost seems to breathe under the ingenious ministrations of Guo Yingxiong's knife.

In his workshop in the Zhanggong district of Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, the 58-year-old conjures worlds that erase time, in which rivers flow eternally, the current rendered so delicately that it almost shimmers with actual movement. An ancient bridge arches over the river, carrying the rhythms of daily life unfolding on a bamboo sheet — a tea peddler's weathered face glistens as he adjusts his shoulder pole, an elderly man navigates wooden planks on his bicycle, and young lovers sit entwined on the bridge's edge, their silhouettes backlit by the sun that stains the river the color of molten copper.

Peering closer at this miniature world, you will notice the gnarled roots of a banyan tree clutching the riverbank, and the bridge's lineage traced in vermilion calligraphy.

"I try to let the material speak for itself," Guo says.

And so the natural russet streaks of bamboo skin are shaped into sunset clouds, a knothole becomes the moon reflected in the river, while the fibrous texture is used to mimic both the bridge's wood grain, and the water's rippling surface.

For more than four decades, Guo has been a living bridge between the ancient art of Hakka bamboo carving and the modern world. His hands, ridged with calluses and scored by decades of nicks, tell the story of an art form that once graced the studies of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) scholars.

Bamboo carving turns the humble material into exquisite canvases of cultural expression, with artisans wielding their knives like painters' brushes to create intricate, decorative patterns.

While its origins date back to the Six Dynasties (222-589) period, the art began to flourish during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), before achieving its golden age during the Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

For centuries, literati revered bamboo as the living embodiment of moral integrity and spiritual purity — its unyielding straightness symbolizing upright character, its hollow stems representing humility, and its evergreen resilience signifying enduring virtue.

This cultural symbolism permeated classical poetry and literature, most famously expressed by the literary giant of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) Su Shi, who once wrote that he would "rather dine without meat than dwell without bamboo."

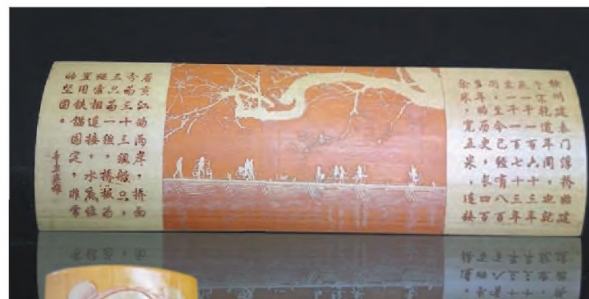
This history gave rise to several regional schools of bamboo carving, each with its own distinctive character, ranging from deeply layered reliefs and shallow elegant carvings, to precise calligraphy and delicate openwork.

The traditions illustrate the remarkable versatility of bamboo as a medium, from simple incised lines to breathtaking three-dimensional sculptures that seem to defy the material's natural limitations, Guo explains.

Among them, the Hakka bamboo carving practiced in Zhanggong district stands



Guo Yingxiong works on a Hakka bamboo carving in his workshop in Ganzhou, Jiangxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



**Above:** Guo carves images in the limited space of a bamboo sheet, from ancient bridges carrying the rhythms of daily life, to images of Nezha, lotus flowers and monks. **Left and right:** One of Guo's decorative bamboo plaques with calligraphy meaning "ten thousand books of fragrance".

as particularly vibrant.

Recognized in 2010 as a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in Jiangxi, it formed as local artisans employed an approach that blends traditional calligraphic carving with creative improvisation.

The resulting pieces, from scholarly brush pots and elegant incense burners, to decorative plaques embellished with couplets, demonstrate a masterful balance between form and function.

Some pieces captivate with their minimalist purity, while others dazzle with their intricate, pattern-rich compositions.

Guo has been exposed to the art since childhood, as he was born to a family of displaced craftsmen from Guangdong province who settled in Jiangxi's bamboo-rich hills.

His father was skilled in multiple fields — as herbalist, carpenter, and master of root carving — and maintained the Hakka tradition of training children through rigorous apprenticeship.

"My first lessons came through pain," Guo recalls with a wry smile.

When he was 6, he was tasked with fetching his father's tools.

"He'd call for a certain knife for specific patterns, and I had to guess which one he meant," he continues.

Wrong guesses earned him slaps on the wrist, an "effective" teaching method he said that helped imprint

the names and uses of dozens of specialized blades onto his memory.

This stringent pedagogy extended to preparing materials, with young Guo soon learning that true mastery begins long before the carving starts. "Bamboo selection follows strict rules, and uses only winter-cut Moso bamboo from south-facing slopes that is at least four years old to ensure the correct density," he explains.

He says that the curing process is exacting — boiling the bamboo in herbal solutions for hours to prevent insect damage, then sun-drying it until the material turns a deep amber. There are some 50-odd steps that need to be taken before the bamboo is ready to be carved.

As he made inroads into the art, Guo gradually mastered the full spectrum of sculpting techniques, establishing himself as a pioneer in preserving and advancing Jiangxi's carving heritage.

In 2021, he was named a provincial-level inheritor. He is known for the diversity of his subjects, including mist-shrouded mountain ranges, delicate bird portraits with feathers rendered through microscopic incisions, architectural wonders, and calligraphic masterpieces.

Recognition has since followed.

One of his pieces, a representation of *heyu* (lotus fish) measuring a mere 20 by 8 centimeters in size,

masterfully incorporates 15 lively carp swimming among lotus leaves and blossoms on the inner wall of the bamboo.

In 2016, a number of his *liuqing* (reserved green) pieces, made using technique in which the natural gradation of the bamboo's outer skin is preserved, were purchased by museums in Jiangxi.

In 2017, Guo opened a Hakka bamboo carving workshop, the first of its kind in Ganzhou, where he has since been busy creating custom-made carved bamboo, and teaching students in an effort to pass the tradition down in this ever-changing world.

He organizes regular workshops, attracting visitors of various ages, from curious 6-year-olds to doctoral candidates, who wish to learn the intricate techniques.

He has trained 30 apprentices, two of whom have already earned the title of district-level inheritors.

Han Lu, a teacher at the Jiangxi Environmental Engineering Vocational College, became an aficionado of the bamboo art as the result of a public benefit program in Ganzhou that offers affordable cultural courses to citizens.

"When I saw that Guo Yingxiong was teaching, I immediately signed up. There's something magical about this art form — its ability to calm the mind and inculcate patience," says Han.

"Working on bamboo slices less than 3 millimeters thick, when every stroke must be precisely controlled, becomes almost meditative," the man in his 30s adds.

After completing 15 sessions, he attempted his first major project with Guo last summer, carving seven hours a day for a week.

"Guo's guidance was invaluable, particularly in material selection. Few realize the complexity that each slice requires — generations of knowledge — to be properly prepared," he says.

He has now started a research project tracing the historical roots of Hakka bamboo carving, while exploring sustainable inheritance at college.

"As a relative beginner myself, I'm determined to continue while helping others appreciate its value," Han says.

Speaking about his plans, Guo says he will continue to explore new creations as part of his mission to keep the art form relevant.

"While remaining rooted in tradition, we have created smaller, more affordable pieces like bookmarks and pendants to appeal to younger and casual buyers," he says.

He has also experimented with contemporary designs, blending classic *liuqing* techniques with modern aesthetics to attract social media-savvy travelers.

"My mission isn't just to preserve — it's to make bamboo carving vital in modern life," he says.

"Every student who learns, every tourist who buys a piece, helps this art survive."

Looking ahead, Guo plans to push for the tradition's inclusion in national vocational competitions. Through such efforts, he hopes to secure a brighter future for the art, one stroke of the knife at a time.

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## It's a 'crumby' job, but I'm happy to do it for the love of bird-kind

Now that winter has finally released its stubborn, talon-like grip on Beijing, and spring has truly arrived, love, as they say, is in the air.

And just perhaps I have played matchmaker for some of my winged friends on high.

Lovers, human and otherwise, are often brought together by chance meetings, and birds are no exception.

So, much to my delight, the fifth-floor balcony "cafe" for birds that I opened in October,

before Jack Frost set foot in the capital, drew one particularly interesting bird that I had not yet seen in Beijing.

Among the numerous sparrows, which are a delightfully gregarious breed, and the constantly cooing spotted doves, loudly chattering azure-winged magpies and small groups of nuthatches, as well as the much larger, tuxedoed magpies and, just once, a raven the size of a small dog, I spied one morning a truly amusing and unexpected visitor — a red-crowned, sharp-eyed woodpecker.

This single woodpecker began showing up in the coldest clutch of winter, when fierce winds from the north rattled the windows and made it seem impossible that such poorly protected creatures could survive. I assumed, or hoped at least, that my provisions made a difference.

The woodpecker would, upon arrival, bob and weave like Mike Tyson, peering around the corner

of my air conditioner and fixing me with a riveting stare and a comical expression as he checked out the scene. When he settled in to dine, his oversized feet and tree-gripping claws would splay out before him.

Since most of my other fluttering visitors come en masse, or in twos and threes, I began to feel sorry for this colorful loner.

Then, one day a few weeks later, I caught a glimpse at my feeder of a female woodpecker, recognizable for having the same features as the male, except for the blazing red crown.

I never saw the two together, as they arrived at different times to feed, but one day two males showed up simultaneously, so just maybe a rivalry was brewing.

But warmer days then set in, and since birds in springtime have numerous food sources, they don't

hang out quite so long at my lofty cafe. As a result, I don't yet know if the woodpeckers are multiplying in my neck of the woods.

Nonetheless, I continue my daily feeding service and keep my eyes open for any newcomers, while greeting the usual morning crowd with a wave, including one plump dove that arrives early, gets a front-row seat and coos to let me know she's ready to dine.

You might well wonder what's on the menu at my popular diner on high. I began last fall with simple hot dog buns that I crumbled when they were properly stale. The sparrows gobbled them up, but the doves seemed unimpressed. So I began to buy croissants by the armload, which have proved more palatable and kept the doves coming back in growing numbers. I also

provide heaps of crumbs from multigrain, seed-coated dinner rolls.

Birds are especially vulnerable in the wild, as unless they are birds of prey, they generally have no worthy defense. They must forage for food, usually on the open ground, which makes them easy targets. And when they shelter in place for the winter in northern areas like Beijing, they face a harsh, continuous struggle.

We've all heard the expression "creature comforts", but really, what comforts are available to our winged friends who choose to stay the winter?

From my Beijing window, I've noted some interesting behavior. First, the birds have widely varying "table" manners while eating. Some are methodical and careful to conserve, while others, seemingly

ravenous, gobble recklessly and scatter crumbs with abandon.

I've also noticed a reversal of stereotypes. You might think that the roost would be ruled by the boisterous azure magpies, but not so. It ends up they are terribly jittery, and the arrival of any bird, even one of their own, puts them to flight.

No, the real king of the roost, the breed that's truly unflappable and even aggressive, is the supposedly peaceful dove, which uses the heft it has gained since autumn, thanks to me, to "elbow" other birds, even fellow doves, out of the way.

In addition to possibly playing the matchmaker, maybe I've also created a monster, albeit a softly cooing one.

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