

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

CHINA WATCH

CHINA DAILY 中国日报

EXPO HARBINGERS

COMPANIES TAKE HEART
FROM PRODUCTS FAIR

BUSINESS, PAGE 3



STAGE PRESENCE

THE MONKEY KING GETS
AN OPERATIC TOUCH

LIFE, PAGE 4



This supplement is printed and distributed in select areas by the Los Angeles Times Media Group. Received by NSD/NSA Registration Unit 05/20/2025 12:46:11 PM



Workers manage a high-tech strawberry production plant in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in February.

DING GENHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Economy turns in promising figures

China's economy grew 5.4% year-on-year in the first three months of the year, beating market expectations and marking a good start for the year amid uncertainties.

Although United States' tariff policy continues to cloud the global economic outlook, officials and economists said they believe China's long-term growth trajectory is unchanged because it has ample room to act on macroeconomic policies and enjoys favorable factors such as a huge domestic market, a comprehensive industrial system and strong capabilities in innovation.

China's value-added industrial output rose 7.7% year-on-year last month, after rising 5.9% in January and February, the National Bureau of Statistics said on April 16.

The value of retail sales of consumer goods rose 5.9%

year-on-year last month, after rising 4% in January and February. China's fixed-asset investment rose 4.2% year-on-year in the first quarter, compared with a rise of 4.1% in January and February, the bureau said.

Sheng Laiyun, deputy head of the bureau, said that despite the headwinds triggered by the U.S. unwarranted imposition of tariffs, China's long-term economic growth will remain unchanged on its positive trajectory, thanks to the country's strong manufacturing base, its huge growth potential in domestic demand and the strengthening of new growth drivers, among other factors.

"We have the confidence, determination and capability to withstand external challenges and achieve the annual growth target (of around 5%)," he said.

Louise Loo, lead economist

at the British think tank Oxford Economics, said, "Data shows economic activity beat estimates across the board in March and in the first quarter, supported by a continuation in stimulus momentum, sizable export front-loading and more secular strengths in high-tech manufacturing."

Robin Xing, chief China economist of Morgan Stanley, said that facing mounting downward pressures from the U.S. tariff hikes, China is likely to prioritize front-loading of the 2 trillion yuan (\$274 billion) package in the second quarter.

"Policymakers may accelerate issuance and deployment of local construction bonds, ramp up the consumer goods trade-in program with broader coverage or more generous subsidies, and push for government purchases of housing inventory," Xing said.

— OUYANG SHIJIA AND ZHOU LANXU

Openness, stability and growth boost confidence

Despite the stiff challenges ahead, China looks set to remain a compelling market for companies in the United States as China continues to expand high-standard opening-up, business executives say.

With China's strong focus on innovation, electric mobility and biotechnology, said Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, it will remain a key market for U.S. companies.

About half of the chamber's member companies still rank China among their top three investment destinations, he said.

In addition to expanding pilot programs for opening up in areas including telecommunications, healthcare and education, China will advance reforms to improve mechanisms for promoting foreign investment and systematically improve the management and facilitation of such investment, the National Development and Reform Commission said on April 11.

Sherri He, managing director for China of the U.S. management counseling firm Kearney, said China's vast domestic market has always been a perceived strength for foreign investment.

"With the current global economic uncertainty intensifying, China's market is expected to become a stabilizer of global business confidence, with its steady economic performance, business environment and technology and innovative capabilities."

Echoing that view, Henry Ding, president for China of the U.S. industrial conglomerate 3M, said China's pursuit of high-quality growth pres-

ents significant opportunities for multinational companies such as 3M. Investment in areas such as automotive, energy and electronics all represent key growth areas for 3M, he said.

Joanne Crevoiserat, chief executive of Tapestry Inc., a luxury goods group whose headquarters are in New York, said China's growing focus on boosting domestic consumption will offer global businesses greater confidence.

China is her company's largest market outside the U.S. and is a major source of inspiration for its brands such as Coach and Kate Spade.

The company had set a target of opening 100 new stores in

China between 2022 and 2025, she said.

Leaders of the American Chamber of Commerce in China told its members early this month that they believe U.S. companies, as well as the U.S.,

China and their people, have all benefited from cross-border trade. While they continue to advocate for improved terms and conditions, they warned that sweeping tariffs will cause more harm than good.

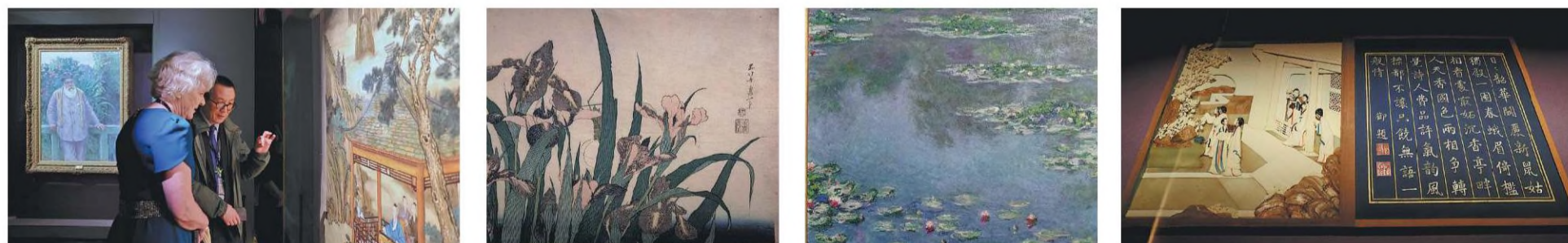
While the U.S. government's turn toward economic nationalism is expected to have enduring consequences, the steady rise of a multipolar world order presents a crucial opportunity to reform and revitalize the multilateral trading system, said Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization, in Beijing.

China's increasingly open stance and firm commitment to multilateralism will play a greater role in attracting global capital and advancing international economic collaboration, Wang said.

— ZHONG NAN

"China's market is expected to become a stabilizer of global business confidence."

SHERRI HE



From left: At the exhibition *Rejoicing in Woods and Springs*, visitors observe a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) painting depicting Emperor Qianlong enjoying leisure time by a lotus pond, with a portrait of Claude Monet in the background. Key exhibits from overseas include *Iris and Grasshopper* by Katsushika Hokusai and *Water Lilies* by Claude Monet, both collected by the Art Institute of Chicago. A Qing Dynasty album on court ladies in gardens collected by the Palace Museum. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG AND WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

GARDEN EXHIBITION SHOWS SEEDS OF CULTURE

In 1772 Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), then just turning 60, had reason to be joyful after finally securing his dream place for retirement in the Forbidden City, the royal palace in the heart of Beijing.

Known as Qianlong Garden, the site in the Ningshou Gong (palace of tranquility and longevity) compound was designed in an exquisite way.

Pavilions, corridors, rockeries, a belvedere, a teahouse, a Buddhist hall and more subtle settings provided a retreat amid mountains and forests within the space of a mere 65,000 square feet, all with a touch of splendor.

Nevertheless, the emperor had little time to appreciate

his surroundings because he handed over the throne to his son 24 years later, and he enjoyed just three years of retirement before he died.

It is hard to know whether Qianlong had enough time to fully savor the retreat from everyday cacophony, but the garden has left us a poetic legacy: a coming together of aesthetics and nature. This is undoubtedly an inspiration for visitors to a new exhibition in the Forbidden City, now known as the Palace Museum.

For the occasion, in *Rejoicing in Woods and Springs: A Journey through Garden Cultures in China and the Wider World*, which will run through June 29, more than 200 exhibits from home and abroad, including

landscape paintings, sculptures, furniture and indoor decorations, are on show at the Meridian Gate Galleries.

In the exhibition visitors can appreciate various artworks related to gardens, not only those famous throughout Chinese history that reveal Zen and literati's refined taste, but also different styles across the world, including the villa garden of Pompeii in Italy, medieval monastery gardens, the Palace of Versailles in France and gardens from the Edo period in Japan.

Qianlong Garden is where to start the journey. A wooden gate carved with lotus patterns from the Building of Luminous Clouds (Yunguang Lou), the Buddhist hall in the Qianlong

Garden, is a highlighted setting in the exhibition.

Through the gate, visitors can peep into a group of wooden screens depicting Buddhist deities also from that hall, and like the retired emperor enjoy a contemplative moment.

A pair of jade censers further create an atmosphere of tranquility. They are from the Hall of Imperial Peace (Qin'an Dian), a Taoist temple in the Imperial Garden in the north of the Forbidden City.

Walking along the zigzag lane in the gallery, which mimics the shape of a bridge in a traditional Chinese garden, visitors can find Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* on one side.

Across the lane, the Japanese ukiyo-e master Katsu-

shika Hokusai's color woodblock print *Iris and Grasshopper* (1833-34) may explain his ideal garden and how his worship of nature influenced Monet and French impressionism. Both art pieces are from a collection at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Wang Yuegong, deputy director of the Palace Museum, said that the exhibition aims to integrate elements of literature, drama and historical allusions with landscape design. "It initiates a dialogue that showcases the artistic splendor of Eastern and Western horticultural traditions, ultimately unveiling the humanistic philosophies embedded within these living masterpieces."

— WANG KAIHAO

China Watch materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp., on behalf of China Daily, Beijing, China.

Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

SOCIETY



An area reclaimed from a mine of Zhunneng Group has been transformed into an ecotourism park in Juungar Banner, Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. LI ZHIPENG / XINHUA

Old mines given new, green lease on life

The once dirty coal mines of Juungar Banner in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, have been given a face-lift and transformed into areas of greenery and wildlife, fueling agriculture and ecotourism thanks to the combined efforts of companies and government.

Zhunneng mine ecological park in the banner features the Heidaigou and Khar Us open-pit coal mines, once the largest mines in Asia, with annual production capacity of 76 million short tons.

The zone was once marked by the deep scars of coal extraction, sunken valleys and uneven slopes where the earth had settled after years of mining. The air often carried a haze of fine black dust, remnants of coal that lingered in the breeze and dulled the sunlight. The land, reshaped by industry, bore the signs of its past with thin soil, sparse vegetation and a delicate ecosystem struggling to recover, according to Inner Mongolia Daily.

Today the great roar of mining operations has gone, and there is no dust in the air. Instead, there are verdant forests, a mix of grass, shrubs and trees, dotted with wildflowers, and wild partridges darting about.

This remarkable transformation stems from environmental initiatives and substantial investment by Zhunneng Group, a subsidiary of China Energy Investment Corporation, said Wang Yu, deputy director of the environmental protection department of Zhunneng Group.

The company has invested 2.88 billion yuan (\$390 million) over 30 years in ecological restoration and has adopted measures including soil improvement, targeted vegetation replanting, innovative water management systems and noise control, Wang said.

The group said it has restored 16,200 acres of land. The vegetation coverage rate has risen from 25% to more than 85%, with all mining areas achieving 100% reclamation, he said.

"Biodiversity has flourished



Some buildings in the park are designed in the shape of specialized mining trucks. PHOTOS BY LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA



Geese swim in a lake in the park.

"Biodiversity has flourished in the restored area, with species numbers rising from a little more than 30 to more than 300."
WANG YU

in the restored area, with species numbers rising from a little more than 30 to more than 300. Wildlife such as ruddy shelducks, foxes and lynxes have now settled in the revitalized ecosystem."

Building on these environmental restoration achievements, Zhunneng Group has pioneered an ecotourism initiative, Zhunneng mine ecological park, a model of sustainability in which environmental recovery and economic growth thrive together, Wang said.

Since starting operations in 2022 Zhunneng mine ecological park is said to have welcomed about 270,000 visitors, almost half of those last year alone, quickly becoming a new landmark for tourism in Ordos, Xinhua News Agency said.

At the western edge of the Heidaigou open-pit coal mine the blue sky forms a backdrop to a harmonious integration of ecology and agriculture, with employees sowing seeds

across reclaimed fields.

"In mid-April we till the soil, form ridges and cover them with film, and in early May we start phased planting of crops such as potatoes, corn, melons, peppers and eggplants on this reclaimed land," said Duan Guojun, leader of the landscaping service team in Zhunneng Group's production service center.

All the fruits and vegetables produced in the fields are supplied to the employee cafeteria, Duan said.

Juungar Banner integrated media center quoted Li Haifeng, an employee of the landscaping team in the service center, as saying, "These vegetables are free of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Since we witness the entire growth process from sowing the seeds to harvesting, we feel totally safe eating them. This is the advantage that green mine construction has delivered to our employees."

The Juungar Banner government is promoting green mine construction throughout the banner. Since implementation of Juungar Banner's three-year green mine construction plan began, 50 green mines have been built, said Jiao Zhanjun, a director in the ecology restoration department of the Juungar Banner bureau of natural resources.

Wildlife such as the black stork, roe deer and foxes, once rare to see, now frequently appear here. The wetlands along the Yellow River in Juungar Banner have become a popular port of call for migratory birds, with tens of thousands of previously rare species such as swans, wild geese and cranes passing through this area, according to Xinhua.

The news agency quoted Xue Yong, head of the natural protection and wildlife management station of the Juungar Banner forestry and grassland bureau, as saying, "The significant increase in the number of migratory birds is a direct reflection of the continuous improvement of the ecological environment in Juungar Banner, closely linked to the long-term promotion of green mine construction."

— LI PEIXUAN AND YUAN HUI

Looking after an ancient friend is a labor of love

Jin Hongjun, 55, recalled the painstaking efforts 20 years ago to save China's beloved 4,500-year-old tree, the General Cypress.

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

Jin, a tree healer with the Dengfeng cultural relics bureau, served as General Cypress' dedicated caretaker from 2004 to 2007, and he talked about the ancient tree as if it were an old friend.

In 2004, under the guidance of Professor Cong Sheng, an ancient-tree conservation expert, Dengfeng authorities launched a comprehensive rescue mission for the ailing cypress. The project, costing hundreds of thousands of yuan, included removing decaying parts of the tree, sterilization, structural reinforcement and soil rehabilitation.

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

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

The tree's historical significance goes back to 110 B.C. when Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) visited Songshan Mountain on an imperial inspection tour. Impressed by its majestic stature, he bestowed upon the tree the title General Cypress.

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

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

Jin, bolstered by training from Professor Cong, expanded his arboreal conservation work. In 2008 he led the protection of 878

ancient trees at the Center of Heaven and Earth's eight historic building sites, in preparation for a UNESCO World Heritage application.

The center was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010.

At Songshan Mountain's Zhongyue Temple, where there are more than 330 ancient cypresses, Jin faced labor shortages. He recruited 50 laborers and trained them, climbing repeatedly to demonstrate conservation techniques.

During one Spring Festival holiday he saw three tourists preparing to burn incense next to an ancient cypress to pray for good luck. He persuaded them not to, telling them, "The best worship for ancient trees is to pour a few buckets of water in the dry season".

The dry clay in the temple was hard like stone and in such a harsh environment ancient cypresses grow extremely slowly, Jin said.

Because methods of determining tree ages were once not as accurate as they are today, some trees thought to be about 1,000 years old may in fact be more than 3,000 or 4,000 years old, he said.

"Ancient architecture valued the natural environment and feng shui, so temples were often built where there were ancient trees. So the ages of many ancient trees in Zhongyue Temple are likely to have been greatly underestimated."

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

Tree preservation is a multidisciplinary science, Jin said.

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

Public awareness of arboreal care to minimize human impact on the growth of ancient trees is also critical, he said.

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

— WU YANBO



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

Regal waters regain the majesty stolen from them

More than 1,200 years ago the poet Li Bai wrote of the renowned Nanlao Spring at Jinci Temple: "The flowing water of Jinci is clean like jade." Sadly, this flowing water dried up about 31 years ago because of the falling water table.

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

Zhai Tianhu, 82, who has lived near Jinci Temple since he was a child, welcomed the resurgence of the spring.

"The water flow is very

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

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

After decades of persistent management and protection efforts, the spring finally began flowing again in May 2023, more than 30 years after it had stopped.

The groundwater level at Nanlao Spring, also known as the Never Aging Spring, is now more than three feet over

the height of several of the spring's fountainheads.

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

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

At the end of last year the Ministry of Culture and Tourism designated Jinci Temple and Tianlong Mountain scenic area as a national 5A-level

tourist attraction.

"The resurgence of Nanlao Spring is a matter of great joy for the people of Shanxi," said Wang Runmei, an official of the Taiyuan Public Facilities Construction and Management Center's No. 2 Road and Drainage Maintenance Station.

After the spring dried up, Shanxi shut down nearby coal mines and companies that use a lot of water, and instigated water resource replacement activities, Wang said.

These efforts ultimately led to the resurgence of the spring.

— ZHU XINGXIN AND CHEN LIANG

CONTACT US

China Daily
15 Huixin Dongjie, Chaoyang, Beijing, China 100029

+86 (0) 10 64918366
chinawatch@chinadaily.com.cn

Advertising:
+86 (0) 10 64918631;
ads@chinadaily.com.cn

Website: www.chinadaily.com.cn

Follow us on:
Facebook.com/chinadaily
x.com/ChinaDaily

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

© 2025 CHINA DAILY
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 05/20/2025 12:46:11 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 05/20/2025 12:46:11 PM

BUSINESS

A visitor inspects porcelain at the U.K. booth during the fifth China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, on April 14.

WANG CHENGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Expo participants laud continuing push to open up

Despite the tough challenges of globalization, China has always been very open to the world, and in doing so has attracted a wide range of investment from many foreign companies, officials and executives say.

They made the remarks during the recently concluded fifth China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, the biggest ever, underlining the confidence of global consumer companies in China.

This year's expo attracted more than 1,700 companies and more than 4,100 brands from 71 countries and regions. The exhibition area of U.S. companies was the largest, with 29 companies and 40 brands taking part, the Hainan provincial government said.

"Given present world conditions, the expo played a reassuring role for many foreign companies," said Huang Cui, deputy director-general of the Hainan Provincial Bureau of International Economic Development. "They are keen to work with China, they have faith in China's opening-up policy and they are optimistic about the Hainan Free Trade Port."

The United Kingdom was guest of honor at this year's expo, and 27 U.K. companies took part, including the luxury brand Burberry, Denby Pottery, Endura cycling gear and Loake shoes.



Visitor get to know a robotic dog at the expo on April 14. PU XIAOXU / XINHUA

29

companies from the United States took part in the fifth China International Consumer Products Expo.

Douglas Alexander, minister of state at the Department for Business and Trade of the United Kingdom, said: "We all have seen the tremendous innovation and growth taking place within China's economy in recent years, not least in digital technologies, life sciences and green energy, and areas which present significant opportunities for both our economies. So we very much want to support British businesses big and small to seize the opportunities that

the Chinese market offers."

The U.K. is keen to explore the opportunities for free and open trade, trade that benefits both Chinese and British firms, Alexander said.

In addition to the U.K., France, Slovakia and Switzerland also showed their products in the form of national exhibition venues.

Denisa Sakova, deputy prime minister of Slovakia, said her country is grateful for the openness and willingness of China to create favorable conditions for the development of trade and investment collaboration.

Trade between the two countries is increasing, and Slovakia aspires to become a reliable and responsible partner that contributes to economic growth and innovation for both sides, she said.

The Thai conglomerate CP Group of Bangkok, a five-time expo participant, said it has developed industrial parks that integrate coffee planting and coffee cultural and tourism in Xinglong, Hainan. Next, it said, it plans to build a modern agricultural food industry park with tropical and efficient agricultural features in the province.

"By drawing on our global resources we would like to promote more products from Hainan and other parts of China to Thailand, Southeast Asia and the world," said Xie Yi, senior vice-president of CP Group.

Denis Cheng, consumer sector leader greater China of the global professional services network EY, said that with government policies to boost consumption, China's overall consumption market is expected to grow in a stable way this year.

As China has expanded the scope of its consumer products trade-in programs, the consumption potential of durable consumer goods is expected to be further boosted this year, Cheng said, adding that new demand and new technologies will help fuel more consumption hot spots and growth points, and emerging sectors such as green, smart and health consumption are likely to produce more growth opportunities.

— ZHU WENQIAN

Island port cuts costs for global airlines

A new bonded maintenance base at Hainan Free Trade Port is cutting costs and red tape for international airlines, positioning the island province as a rising hub for aircraft repair in the Asia-Pacific region.

The initiative, dubbed a duty-free shop for aircraft repairs, offers tax exemptions on imported parts and waives import guarantees and streamlines Customs clearance.

The incentives can cut airline maintenance costs by as much as 15%, local officials said.

At a Haikou maintenance base operated by HNA Technic and its subsidiary Grand China Aviation Maintenance, a Mongolian Airlines Boeing 787-9 underwent major repairs in mid-January, the first bonded service for a Mongolian airline in Hainan. The facility has also serviced aircraft from South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam since it was opened in 2022.

Since June 2023 Hainan's bonded policy has allowed tax-free use of repair materials and temporary import permits for aircraft later sold domestically, a rare feature in global trade zones. Local Customs has accelerated approvals with pre-submitted documentation and dedicated green channels for bonded zone traffic.



An employee repairs a foreign aircraft at a maintenance base in Haikou, Hainan province.

ZHANG LIYUN / XINHUA

The reforms are driving rapid growth. In the first three months of this year 19 aircraft and four engines underwent maintenance at Hainan Free Trade Port's one-stop aircraft repair base, with the total value of serviced equipment reaching 148 billion yuan (\$20.5 billion), 72% more than a year earlier, Haikou Customs said on April 8.

The growth builds on a record-breaking 2024, when 49 aircraft and 16 engines entered Hainan's bonded zone for repairs, totaling 311.3 billion yuan in value.

Last year VietJet Air of Vietnam completed its first wide-bodied A330 inspection in Hainan, involving engine removal and structural upgrades. Grand China Aviation Maintenance, certified in more than 15 countries and regions, including the United States, the European Union, Thailand and Vietnam, credits Hainan Free Trade Port's preferential policies for attracting overseas customers.

With Hainan preparing for expanded Customs operations under its Free Trade Port status, companies are targeting markets in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and beyond.

"Policy innovation and international collaboration will be crucial in making Haikou a full-scale Asia-Pacific maintenance, repair and operation center," said Zhou Junping, chairman of Hainan Development Holdings Co.

The push is believed to be part of China's strategy to establish Hainan as a high-end service hub for aviation repair business amid competition with Singapore and Dubai.

— CHEN BOWEN

Yunnan coffee winning fans around the globe

Pu'er, a city located in a mountainous region of Southwest China's Yunnan province, is famous for its Pu'er tea, a type of fermented tea. However, of late, it has also quietly become a major production hub for China's coffee industry, boasting the nation's largest cultivation area, highest yields and most refined beans.

At Yunnan Simao Beigui Coffee's plantation in Pu'er's Nandaohé Village, workers and farmers are busily involved in washing, pulping, fermenting and drying fresh coffee beans. Each step of the process has been meticulously crafted to ensure the preservation of flavor and quality.

Soon, these beans will be loaded onto trucks and begin their journey to reach coffee shops in booming Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Chengdu, Sichuan province, and also boutique roasters in countries like the Netherlands and Germany.

"Compared with previous years, the coffee cherries of the 2024/2025 harvest season (from October 2024 to March 2025) are larger and glossier, attracting buyers from around the world," said Zhou Zhiyan, the plantation's manager.

The company exported 1,980 short tons of green coffee



Workers celebrate the quality of this year's coffee bean harvest at an estate in Pu'er, Yunnan province, in January. HU CHAO / XINHUA

beans in 2024, she said.

With its distinctive flavor, Yunnan coffee is winning fans around the world. The province's coffee exports reached 140 million yuan (\$19.28 million) in the first two months of 2025, a year-on-year increase of 339.3%, data from Kunming Customs showed.

During the same period, Yunnan exported 3,070 short tons of coffee, up 114.1% on a yearly basis.

Global coffee buyers, especially in Europe, the United States, South Korea and Japan, are actively looking for new origins to diversify their supply chains. Yunnan's emergence fills this need, offering both reliability and novelty,

said Li Hong, vice-president of Yunnan Agricultural University, which is headquartered in Kunming, provincial capital of Yunnan.

"Yunnan coffee is known for its clean cup (free of taints and defects), floral aroma, fruity notes and mild bitterness — qualities that make it competitive on the global stage," Li said. "As farming techniques and processing methods improve, overall consistency and quality of Yunnan coffee have become increasingly attractive to international buyers."

According to Kunming Customs, Yunnan's coffee exports jumped 358% year-on-year to 35,830 short tons in 2024.

The coffee was shipped to 29 countries and regions — including the Netherlands, the United States, and Vietnam — firmly securing Yunnan's position as the top coffee-exporting region in China.

Zhang Yuebin, vice-president of Kunming-based Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said China's own booming domestic coffee culture has also led to better beans.

As domestic consumers demand higher quality, it has pushed producers in Yunnan to innovate and refine their techniques, and raised the country's coffee import volume, Zhang said.

This is in line with the latest data. China's imports of coffee, tea and spices amounted to 22.14 billion yuan in 2024, surging 13.4% year-on-year, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Domestic demand for coffee — especially premium varieties with diverse flavor profiles — has seen a significant increase, and this upward trend will continue this year, said Xing Xiaojing, manager of Customs affairs at Suzhou Mingdoufang Technology, a Suzhou, Jiangsu province-based coffee bean importer and storage services provider.

— ZHONG NAN

LIFE



The design for the scenes depicting the undersea palace (left) and the tour of heaven (right) in the stage adaptation of *The Monkey King*. Below: The illustrations to promote the play. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The *Monkey King*, one of the most beloved characters in Chinese literature, is set to make his Western operatic debut. The legendary figure from the 16th-century Chinese novel *Journey to the West* will leap onto the stage of the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco in November, not only an artistic achievement but also a moment of cultural exchange between East and West.

The production, commissioned by the San Francisco Opera in partnership with the Chinese Heritage Foundation of Minnesota, is believed to be the first opera to be sung in both English and Chinese. The opera's premiere follows the company's successful adaptation of another Chinese classic, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which debuted in 2016 and toured China the following year to widespread acclaim.

The Monkey King draws from the opening chapters of *Journey to the West*, focusing on Sun Wukong, a monkey born from stone and that then acquires supernatural powers through Taoist practices.

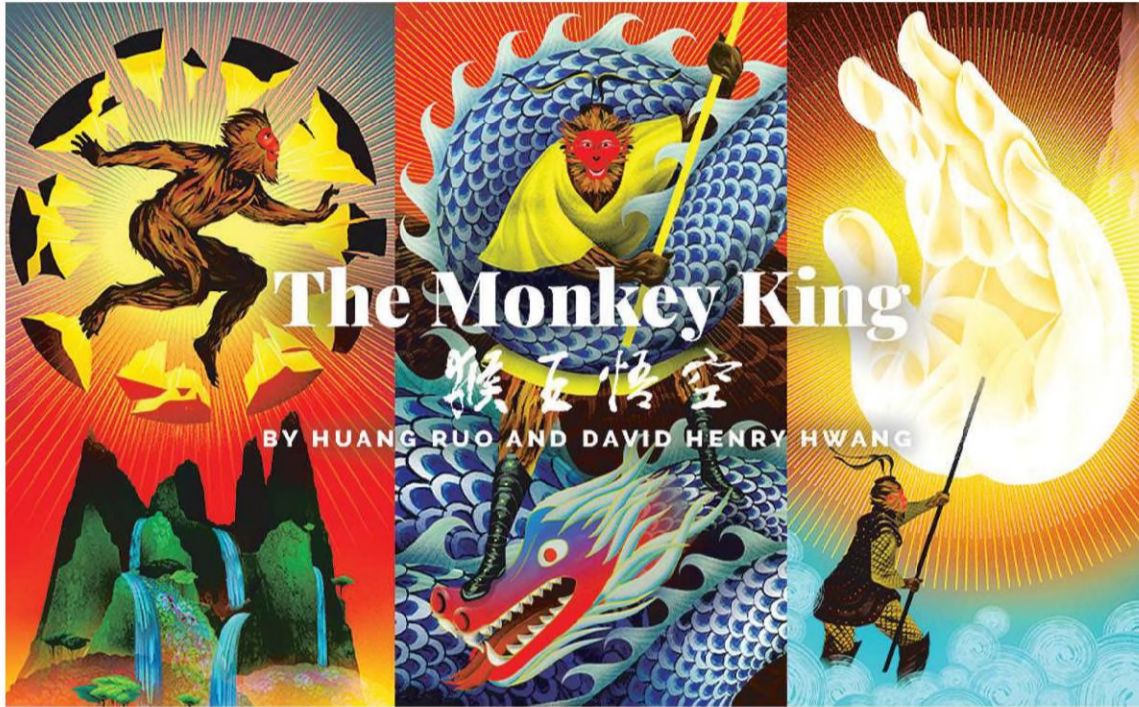
The story follows his rise to become ruler of the monkeys and his audacious challenges to the gods of sea and heaven in his relentless quest for immortality.

"Many scoff at his aspirations, but he is set on proving them wrong with his signature cunning and charm," the opera's synopsis says. "He wins every battle against legendary warriors, but the respect he longs for is always out of reach."

The narrative culminates with his rebellion against heaven, resulting in his imprisonment under a mountain by Buddha for 500 years — where he remains trapped until freed by the monk Tang Sanzang, setting the stage for the epic "journey to the west".

San Francisco Opera's General Director Matthew Shilvock

Old folk hero set to wow audiences



The Monkey King

BY HUANG RUO AND DAVID HENRY HWANG

said this character will resonate with U.S. audiences.

"I think in America there will be a lot of resonance, because it's an action hero story, and one with great depth behind it. There is something so inherently appealing about this character and his great strength and courage, his mischievousness and irreverence, and ultimately he's there helping guide this incredibly sacred journey. So he's got all of these layers for audiences to go into."

What makes this production particularly innovative is its blend of traditional Chinese and contemporary Western artistic elements. The opera combines classical operatic performances with puppetry, dance and elements of Peking Opera to create what Shilvock



The *Monkey King*'s costume design.

describes as "a complete feast for the senses" with "accessible and beautiful" music and "spectacular, playful and energetic" visuals.

The opera's composer Huang Ruo, who has long been interested in bringing *The Monkey King* to the stage, found personal motivation in creating a Chinese superhero figure for international audiences. Having seen his own children surrounded by superheroes such as Spider-Man and Batman, Huang found an opportunity to introduce the *Monkey King* as an alternative role model, not just for his children but for a broader audience as well.

The creative team faced significant challenges in adapting this classic tale for the operatic

stage. "It's been very important to us that we do this as authentically as possible," Shilvock said. "One of the important questions which we had to answer was that those first few chapters of *Journey to the West* that we are covering in the opera are all action. It's just go, go, go, go, go."

This presented a fundamental challenge for the operatic form.

"In the opera you want moments where you stand back and you take a pause and reflect, a chance to internalize and to have an emotional response," Shilvock said. "So we knew we needed to find a way to achieve that in the opera."

The solution came from the composer Huang Ruo and the librettist David Henry Hwang, who incorporated six Buddhist sutras into the action. This innovative approach means that the *Monkey King*'s adventures — from the depths of the sea to his epic battle with the gods in heaven — are balanced by moments of repose with the Goddess Guanyin and a chorus of Bodhisattvas reflecting on the *Monkey King*'s progress in Buddhist sutras.

The new production builds on the success of the San Francisco Opera's previous adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* in 2016. As *The Monkey King* prepares for its world premiere on Nov 14, Shilvock sees it as part of a broader cultural exchange that strengthens bonds between nations.

"I think it's particularly exciting when you can have a piece that travels between countries and honors the cultural heritage of, in this case, China, and brings that to life in America," Shilvock said.

"I'm excited to see how pieces, like *The Monkey King* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* not just have a presence there but have that bond artistically as well."

— LIA ZHU

Reshaped heritage gives crafts aficionados a sense of history

The morning sun shines through carved wooden screens, falling on the petals of a handcrafted peony taking shape under Li Yifan's deft fingers.

The flower is made from a stem of the medicinal plant *tongcao* (rice paper plant) by the same delicate art that once adorned Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) court ladies, Li, a Beijinger in her 40s, said.

The tradition continued for more than two millennia to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

"I fix it onto modern hair accessories," Li said, as she coaxed delicate white fibers into fragile petals through meticulous pasting, folding and pressing in the softly lit Yuxun Jingxi, a newly opened shop in the heart of the bustling Wangfujing area of Beijing, in late March.

Li, a fourth-generation inheritor of this craft, said she is proud to revive the ancient art that few people recognize today.

Her handiwork has enabled the ancient art form to attract

interest among an increasing number of contemporary aficionados of fine things, especially young people.

"Before paper existed our ancestors sliced this stem into sheets thinner than silk," she said as she held up the sliced snow-white pith of the plant.

What makes the material extraordinary is its chameleon-like quality — translucent enough to mimic cherry blossoms when thinly worked, yet capable of layering into the plump curves of magnolias, she said.

"They mimic real flowers: natural, biodegradable and surprisingly durable. In the production there is no waste because the entire plant is used. We grind the scraps to make pigment with pollen."

The manual technique has endured unchanged down the ages, she said.

Each step requires perfect balance. "Hand pressure must be perfect. Too firm and the material breaks; too gentle and you can't form the curves. Interestingly, slightly



Li Yifan makes handcrafted flowers with rice paper plant. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Earrings and brooches featuring Beijing embroidery motifs.

sweaty hands help. Normally, we have just 20 seconds to shape a petal before drying or it won't hold its shape. But with natural hand moisture we gain 40 precious seconds for detailing."

With the opening of Yuxun Jingxi, more products from her delicate touch — ranging from floral rings, brooches and table ornaments blending *tongcao* with modern elements — are now gaining a lot of admiration.

Wang Jingjing, one of the initiators of Yuxun, a brand established in 2023, said a variety of heritage techniques and products is exhibited in the store, with new additions constantly rotating.

"On any given day visitors can witness live demonstrations from artisans, including practitioners of national, municipal and regional-level intangible cultural heritage, ranging from traditional craft displays to large-scale installations."

Next to Li's demonstration table, Weng Xiang, who works in a Beijing embroidery workshop, has bridged the ancient *Jingxi* and modern fashion.

Jingxi, also known as palace or Beijing embroidery, flourished during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties as

an exclusive craft for the imperial court, adorning royal robes, ceremonial objects and palace decorations.

"We carefully extract motifs from classical pieces of imperial embroidery, then reimagine them with modern aesthetics," Weng said.

"For example, our gold-embroidered earrings and brooches are made from repurposed fragments of heritage patterns."

In the shop she presents items such as a flying swallow pin, which was shaped first through traditional gold-wrapped thread embroidery — a luxurious Chinese needlework technique in which real gold foil or gilded threads are meticulously coiled around silk strands — and then stitched the motif onto calfskin backing to create dimension.

"This transforms a museum-worthy technique into a lightweight, wearable pin. It's wildly popular because it turns heritage into something tangible and personal."

— YANG FEIYUE

CHINA DAILY GLOBAL WEEKLY

A 32-page weekend tabloid, featuring news, views and analysis of China and the globe.

Now readers can find China Daily Global Weekly on Flipster, the digital magazine subscription platform from EBSCO, which provides institutions worldwide with leading research databases, scholarly journals, magazine subscriptions, e-books, discovery services and more.

ebSCO.com/products/flipster/magazine/china-daily-global-weekly