

Nature's refugees

Jiangxi balances farming and protection of endangered birds
GOING GREEN, PAGE 5



Next-gen tech drives display panel industry
BUSINESS, PAGE 9



Deal in sight

Iran-US nuclear talks move to next phase after Rome meeting
WORLD, PAGE 6

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2025

XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Policy focus on consumption to drive growth

Measures aimed at stabilizing jobs, increasing people's income, alleviating financial burdens

By FAN FEIFEI and OUYANG SHIJIA

China's pro-consumption initiatives — a top priority of the country's policy agenda for this year — are expected to shore up consumer confidence and unleash the potential of domestic demand to stimulate economic growth, while hedging the impact of the United States' tariff hikes, said officials, economists and executives.

They noted that China has demonstrated firm determination to further vitalize the consumer market and address prominent constraints on consumption by bolstering people's well-being amid rising trade protectionism and external uncertainties, with a particular focus on stabilizing jobs, increasing household income and alleviating financial burdens.

A comprehensive policy package to boost consumption will accelerate the country's shift toward a consumption-driven growth model from an export- and investment-led growth model, they said. The economists and executives also projected a robust recovery for China's consumer market this year, with concrete measures aimed at strengthening consumers' ability and willingness to spend gradually taking effect.

President Xi Jinping has emphasized efforts to expand domestic demand, as well as establish and improve a long-term mechanism for expanding residents' consumption, so that residents can consume with the help of stable income, dare to consume without worries, and are willing to consume due to the excellent consumption environment and strong sense of gain. Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when attending the second group study session of the Political Bureau of the 20th CPC Central Committee in January 2023.

According to the Central Economic Work Conference held in December last year, the foremost priority for policymakers in 2025 is to vigorously boost consumption, improve investment efficiency and expand domestic demand on all fronts.

China will make expanding domestic demand a long-term strategy, while solid measures

should be taken to stabilize employment, boost incomes and create demand with high-quality supply, Premier Li Qiang said earlier this month when chairing a symposium on the economic situation.

To stimulate domestic demand and solve key challenges weighing on consumer sentiment, the general offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued a special action plan for boosting consumption.

Li Chunlin, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that unlike past policies that primarily targeted the supply side, the new plan places great emphasis on stepping up policy support on the demand side by raising people's income and reducing financial burdens.

The plan calls for promoting wage growth by strengthening employment support and raising minimum wage standards in a scientific and reasonable manner, and it includes stabilizing the stock market to expand property income channels, he said, adding that these measures will give consumers greater confidence in their spending power.

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

Sun highlighted the need for a comprehensive policy mix to spur consumption, including short-term moves such as issuing consumption coupons, as well as long-term spending on strengthening the social security network.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said that expanding domestic demand by boosting consumption could effectively help buffer external headwinds and prop up economic vibrancy.

The consumer-centered stimulus measures will reduce China's reliance on exports and investment for growth and facilitate its transition to a more consumption-led economy, Pan said.

See Growth, page 3

No sweat



Tiangong Ultra, a humanoid robot from the Beijing Innovation Center of Human Robotics, competes in the Humanoid Robot Half Marathon in Beijing on Saturday along with its human navigators. The robot, which won the race, completed the run in 2 hours, 40 minutes and 42 seconds as the world's first humanoid robot to finish a half-marathon. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY See story, page 3

Xi's visits hailed as inspiring, strategic and timely

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok, SHI XIAOFENG in Phnom Penh and YANG RAN in Beijing

President Xi Jinping's recent trip to Southeast Asia, his first overseas visit this year, underscored China's commitment to bolstering good-neighborly relations and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation, analysts said.

Xi visited Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia last week, demonstrating China's dedication to supporting multilateralism and international trade rules. Amid global challenges like trade protectionism and unilateralism, China's efforts to build a community with a shared future with its neighbors inject fresh energy into regional and global economic growth and stability, the analysts said.

Throughout his tour, Xi reaffirmed China's commitment to fostering friendship and partnership with neighboring nations.

In Vietnam, Xi said that building the China-Vietnam community with a shared future carries great global significance. In Malaysia, he said that China is ready to work with Malaysia to build a high-level strategic China-Malaysia community with a shared future. In Cambodia, Xi and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun

Manet agreed to build an all-weather China-Cambodia community with a shared future in the new era and designated 2025 as the China-Cambodia Year of Tourism.

Rujipun Assarut, a senior researcher at the Kasikom Research Center in Bangkok, Thailand, said, "Amid US tariff tensions, President Xi Jinping's Southeast Asia trip is a well-timed and strategic move signifying how China is willing to be a dependable economic partner while nurturing relationships in the advancement of mutual prosperity among the countries."

"China and the countries have signed dozens of cooperation agreements, including deals on enhancing supply chains and railway cooperation with Vietnam and upgrading joint industrial parks with Malaysia. These will strengthen cooperation in supply chains and trade promotion between China and the region," he added.

Nguyen Minh Vu, Vietnam's permanent deputy minister of foreign affairs, said the outcomes of President Xi's state visit are diverse and outstanding, with positive and long-term impacts on bilateral relations, according to a report by Viet Nam News, the

national English language daily.

Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan told local media on Thursday that Malaysia and China will set up a consultative council to coordinate the implementation of 31 bilateral cooperation documents signed between the two countries during Xi's state visit.

Loh Wee Keng, chairman of the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China, said: "Twelve years ago, during President Xi's first visit to Malaysia (as president), he introduced numerous projects. This year's visit further enhances China-Malaysia cooperation, opening up more opportunities for businesses."

He emphasized that as the United States' new tariff policy creates global economic uncertainty, Xi's visit to Southeast Asia was timely and will bring more economic opportunities and stability to the region.

Suthiphand Chirathivat, a professor emeritus of economics and former director of the ASEAN Studies Center at Chulalongkorn University, said Xi's trip conveyed the message that China wants to work together with Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries for an open dialogue.

"ASEAN countries should take a pause and think about who should be trusted. It's obvious that the US only prioritizes its own interests. As emerging economies in the world, China and ASEAN are important to each other and need each other," he said.

"As economic and trade cooperation between China and ASEAN accelerates, trade and investment continue to grow steadily, and collaboration in industrial and supply chains is becoming increasingly close. After President Xi's trip, I believe such relations will grow even closer with stronger mutual trust," he added.

Chhem Kieth Rethy, senior minister and chairman of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of Cambodia, said he believes that the building of an all-weather China-Cambodia community with a shared future in the new era will be a moment of renewal for both countries.

President Xi's visit inspired greater confidence regarding the cooperation and development between the two countries, he said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

Voicing dissent



Thousands of protesters rally on Saturday against the Donald Trump administration's policies in Chicago, the US state of Illinois. The demonstrations ranged from marches through midtown Manhattan to rallies outside the White House in Washington, DC.

JACEK BOZCZARSKI / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES See story, page 7

China vital in reshaping intl financial architecture

WORLD WATCH
By Stephen Ndegwa

China's expanding role in the global financial system reflects a deliberate and strategic effort to create a more balanced and inclusive economic order. Over the past two decades, China has positioned itself as a key architect of new financial mechanisms aimed at bolstering the growth and resilience of the Global South.

Simultaneously, it has opened its domestic financial markets to foreign participation while expanding its own banking and financial institutions abroad. This dual strategy amplifies China's influence in global finance, challenging the dominance of Western-led international institutions.

The formal launch of the New Development Bank under the BRICS framework in 2015 and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2016 underscores

China's commitment to fostering economic cooperation and financial autonomy among developing nations. Headquartered in Shanghai and Beijing respectively, these institutions provide alternative funding for infrastructure and development, diversifying the global financial landscape. By prioritizing projects in renewable energy, transportation and urban resilience, they address systemic gaps left by traditional institutions, which have historically focused on macroeconomic stability at the expense of tangible, large-scale development.

Set up with an initial capital of \$100 billion each, the NDB and AIIB are a departure from Western financial hegemony. The NDB's governance model grants equal voting rights to founding members — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — regardless of economic size, ensuring no single nation dominates decisions.

See Finance, page 3

GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECT OF SWEEPING US TARIFFS: UNCERTAINTY, INSTABILITY

Experts, world leaders, international bodies concerned by White House trade moves

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com



The global economic landscape faces profound uncertainty following the imposition of sweeping tariffs by the United States, a move that has already triggered retaliatory measures, market volatility, and warnings of severe disruption to international trade and supply chains.

The US policy shift, unveiled on April 2 under the banner of "Liberation Day", introduced a baseline 10 percent tariff, coupled with higher "reciprocal tariffs" targeting specific countries based on bilateral trade deficits. However, in a dramatic volte-face on April 9, the US announced a 90-day pause on the "reciprocal tariffs", claiming it needed time to negotiate deals with individual countries on the tariffs.

No such courtesy was extended to China, with the US escalating the tariffs on the nation's exports to 145 percent.

Major economies and international organizations have all expressed deep concern about the impact the tariffs will have on the global and domestic economies as the US pivots away from international trading norms.

See Turmoil, page 2

Inside

- Editorial, page 11
- Comment, page 12
- See more, pages 7, 10

Newsstand prices:
US \$1 Canada C\$1
UK £1.50 EU €1.60
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

www.chinadailyglobal.com
A member of ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK
China Daily Global ©2025 All Rights Reserved

PAGE TWO

Turmoil: Openness in global trade threatened

From page 1

China's commerce ministry quickly vowed countermeasures to "safeguard its own rights and interests."

The EU described the tariffs as a "major blow" and began preparing retaliatory steps. Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba called the US move a "national crisis", while Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese criticized the baseline tariff as "completely unnecessary".

The tariffs have also injected a significant dose of unpredictability into the global economy.

"Uncertainty and volatility are undoubtedly contributing to a more cautious economic and business environment," World Bank President Ajay Banga recently told reporters, referring to market turbulence caused by the US tariff policy. He added this uncertainty would "certainly" lead to slower growth than previously expected.

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said a day after the tariffs were announced: "We are still assessing the macroeconomic implications of the announced tariff measures, but they clearly represent a significant risk to the global outlook at a time of sluggish growth."

By April 17, the eve of the Spring Meetings of the IMF and World Bank, Georgieva said that the trade tariff uncertainty was "literally off the charts".

"The world economy's resilience is being tested by the reboot of the global trading system that threatens to cause turbulence in financial markets," she said.

Poorest hit hardest

Fears of a tariff-induced global recession have raised concerns about the potential impact on the world's poorest people, and those at the bottom of the US socio-economic ladder.

"I sincerely hope that we will have no recession, because a recession will have dramatic consequences, especially for the poorest people in the world," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on April 9.

Rebeca Grynspan, head of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, said in a statement to UN News that the 44 Least Developed Countries, contributing minimally to US trade deficits, should be exempt, as tariffs would worsen their debt crises.

"Our emphasis has been to put attention on what can happen to countries that are more vulnerable, such as the least developed countries, and small island developing states. What is happening to those countries is what really worries us," she said.

Tim Jones, head of policy at the UK-based Debt Justice campaign group, said on his blog that the tariffs will intensify the debt crisis in lower-income countries.

He also said that tariffs hit countries needing export earnings to service external debts, which are potentially compounded by currency fluctuations and rising borrowing costs.

A panel discussion, Global Responses to an American Reset of International Trade, was held at the Center for Asia Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, on April 14, with Mireya Solis, the center director calling the US tariffs "of utmost importance".

Shujiro Urata, a professor emeritus at Tokyo's Waseda University, told the panel fears of a recession loom large. The tariffs, he said, "would slow down the US economy, which was doing OK before this," with negative spillover effects for Japan, Europe, and other economies.

Urata warned the "regressive nature" of tariffs could also worsen income distribution in the US. A group of people in the United States who are not so rich maybe supported the policy for a better economy. But I think they are the ones, I'm afraid, who will be hurt most by this tariff, he said.

Solis said "American farmers are very worried about losing export markets abroad".

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, told China Daily the US had opened a "real can of worms" and injected unpredictability into the international trading system. He said markets are "beginning to speak", and volatility has been a key feature.

At the Brookings event, Scott Kennedy, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), spoke of the tariff announcements impact on US markets.

You saw one of the reasons the US backed off last week is the huge negative-effect signal sent by the nation's stock markets, he said.

Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, expressed pessimism about a quick recovery, saying the US stock market is unlikely to recover in 2025. He also cautioned that a US recession is "likely".

Jesus Carrillo, a guest lecturer at El Colegio de Mexico, said at the same event that Mexico is already facing the likelihood of a recession.

Dollar's demise?

Xie Jianhua, founder of the US-China E-commerce & Trading Chamber, told China Daily that the deeper crisis lies in how the US president's policy logic — including interference with the US Federal Reserve, "contempt for international norms, like threatening to annex Greenland or seize the Panama Canal" — and an erratic diplomatic stance, unravels the "social network" underlying the US dollar's dominance.

The dollar's hegemony relies on global trust in institutional stability, not intimidation, and "rising US Treasury yields, a plummeting dollar index, and soaring gold prices are the market's vote of no confidence in that trust," he said.

Xie added that continuing debt spirals, overusing tariffs, and trampling upon international rules, risk repeating the decline seen with the British pound, drawing parallels with financial crises of the 1930s and 1970s.

Gupta said trade issues are already impacting the US dollar. While a trade war-induced global recession could lead investors to "crowd into the dollar" which is traditionally seen as a safe haven, this would present the US with a conundrum.

The US wants a weaker dollar, but at the same time, they want to keep the dollar as the king of the currency jungle, Gupta said.



New vehicles are parked at Daikoku Pier in Yokohama, south of Tokyo on April 11. Japan has been hit with 24 percent levies on its exports to the US, although these rates have, like most of the US tariffs, been paused for 90 days. PHILIP FONG / AFP



Above: A man pilots a boat past a port in Buenaventura, on Colombia's Pacific coast on April 9. WTO warned on April 10 that the US-China tariff war could severely damage the global economic outlook. FERNANDO VERGARA / AP



Left: A farmer inspects wheat crop in his field on the outskirts of Amritsar, India, on April 3. NARINDER NANU / AFP



Left: Workers pack furniture for shipping to the US at Corporate Specialist's factory on the outskirts of Muar, in Johor state, Malaysia, on April 11. VINCENT THIAN / AP



Right: An employee of a local women's footwear brand Patris shows a product on a livestream on TikTok in Bogor, Indonesia, on April 14. TATAN SYULIANA / AP

Solis said at the event there is "the possibility that folks begin to lose confidence in the US dollar".

The US aggressive tariff policies will likely undermine the US dollar's role as a global reserve currency. Other nations will shift to more stable financial assets due to unpredictable US monetary policy, Chris Pereira, the founder and CEO of iMPact, a communications and business consulting group, told China Daily. "And once the dollar's trust is gone, it's tough to restore," he said.

China's firm stance

While the global response to the US tariffs has differed — some countries have opted for negotiation and others retaliation — China has remained firm from the outset, experts said.

Kennedy, from CSIS, said of China's firm response: "They were ready for whatever was going to come their way... they felt they had to push back, because they were already facing very high numbers (from previous tariffs)".

He said China feels it has advantages in this "game of chicken". The reasons include diversified trading partners, the US comprising only 14 percent of China's exports, China's having less market-sensitive financial sector compared to the US, and its position as the top trading partner for over 100 countries.

"The Chinese are in this, as they say, to the very end," Kennedy said.

Gupta said while China's response has been firm, maintaining a measured approach has become diffi-

cult because the US keeps "ratcheting up" the stakes, resulting in a possible collapse in bilateral trade.

Writing in Foreign Affairs on April 16, Michael Beckley, an associate professor of political science at Tufts University, said from Beijing's perspective, "the trade wars Washington is stoking are not mere economic spats. They are an assault on China's comprehensive national power — and a potential prelude to a shooting war."

The EU initially moved toward retaliation against the tariffs but paused after the US offered a 90-day window for talks. At the same time, the EU approved on April 9 its first retaliatory measures against US tariffs, effective April 15. The measures impose a 25 percent tax on a variety of US imports, countering the administration's March decision to levy a 25 percent tariff on all steel and aluminum imports to the US.

"The EU's tariffs are related not to the reciprocal tariffs, but they're related to the auto tariffs... as well as the steel and aluminum tariffs," Gupta explained.

Urata, from Waseda University, said retaliation is not a viable option for Japan for several reasons. "One, of course, is national security. We depend on the US for national security," he said.

Instead, Japanese companies are focusing on diversification.

"Now they talk about a 'US plus one' or 'America plus one' strategy because we cannot really depend on the US as an export market as much as we used to... Japanese companies have to diversify their export destinations," he said.

Carrillo, from El Colegio de Mexico, said Mexico is largely shielded by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. However, it is still facing uncertainty and potential rule changes and is also looking to diversify.

"The interdependence of our economy is much bigger [with the US]," he said. "But since we are moving to a deals-based international trade instead of a rules-based international trade system... the European Union is a perfect fit for the Mexican economy," Carrillo noted, suggesting that Mexico might need to increase local content for exports to the US.

Breaking the system

The tariff turmoil is straining the multilateral, rules-based trading system, largely built under US leadership after World War II.

"The US is violating WTO rules," said Urata. "It is very sad to see the US destroying the WTO system which the US played the key role in establishing. You can destroy a system very quickly, but it takes so much time and energy to build or rebuild the system," he said.

Otaviano Canuto, a former World Bank vice-president, warned that "reciprocal tariffs" undermine multilateralism and WTO principles like non-discrimination, potentially reviving destructive patterns from the 1930s.

Beckley echoed this historical parallel, writing, "That's how the world fell apart in the 1930s: protectionism, fear, and rising powers with no way to grow but through force."

"Trade wars don't just raise prices. They unravel alliances and push rivals toward confrontation. By treating global affairs like a transactional hustle, the United States risks tearing down the very system that has kept the peace for generations."

He described the current US approach as one of becoming a "rogue superpower", one that is "aggressive, powerful, and increasingly out for itself," suggesting this path is driven partly by the nation's capability to act unilaterally.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned on April 10 that the US-China tariff war could slash bilateral merchandise trade by "as much as 80 percent" and "severely damage the global economic outlook."

"It is critical for the global community to work together to preserve the openness of the international trading system," Okonjo-Iweala said, cautioning against the "potential fragmentation of global trade along geopolitical lines."

TOP NEWS

Thrown offtrack

A bus hangs precariously from an overpass on Saturday after colliding with a vehicle, in Santiago, Chile. Eleven people were injured in the accident.

JAVIER TORRES / AP PHOTO



Robot half-marathon puts innovations to the test

By CHENG YU

chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

The world's first humanoid robot half-marathon, with 20 robots running alongside thousands of human participants, was held in Beijing on Saturday, but it was just the starting gun for China's burgeoning robotics industry, according to executives and experts.

The marathon, despite some imperfect performances like an occasional stumble, proved that China's humanoid robots are moving from flashy laboratory demos to real-world scenarios. In the shadow of the United States' recent tariff hikes, China's advances in artificial intelligence and robotics may stand out as a potent counterstrike, they added.

In the 21-kilometer half-marathon, which tested the physical limits of even some human runners, six of the 20 robots managed to finish the race. Tiangong Ultra, standing 1.8 meters tall and weighing 55 kilograms, won the race with a time of 2 hours, 40 minutes and 42 seconds.

Xiong Youjun, CEO of the Beijing Humanoid Robot Innovation Center, the developer of Tiangong Ultra, said, "The goal wasn't just to cross the finish line, but to test key technologies through the rigors of a long-distance run, then improve technological breakthroughs, and finally, lay the groundwork for robots to enter factories and daily life services."

Xiong said the robots needed compact, heat-resistant joints, precise motion control and strong core algorithms to finish the race. The half-marathon also tested their stability, reliability, battery life and ability to handle complex terrain like slopes and turns.

Liang Liang, deputy director of the management committee of Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, one of the organizers of the race, said: "The robot half-marathon, the world's first such race, marked a new starting gun for the whole industry. It also sparked deeper public discussion around human-machine coexistence, raised awareness and will help accelerate the development of

the robotics industry."

The event came as China accelerates its push to develop humanoid robots, having labeled them as a "strategic frontier" in 2023, when it also set a target of mass production and domestic supply chain security by 2027.

While US companies such as Boston Dynamics and Tesla have dominated headlines with viral demos and futuristic visions, Chinese brands and companies are rapidly catching up — not just in manufacturing but also in mass-producing such robots and making them inexpensive for ordinary people.

For instance, Unitree Robotics, another leading robotics company, priced its G1 humanoid robots at 99,000 yuan (\$13,560). Such a price sets them apart from Tesla's Optimus, which is expected to cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000. The company said it is currently preparing for a globally livestreamed humanoid robot boxing match.

According to a recent report by Leaderobot and nine other institutions, China is on track to produce

more than 10,000 humanoid robots this year, accounting for more than half of global output and generating 8.24 billion yuan in sales revenue.

With costs falling and ecosystems maturing, the humanoid robot industry is poised to leap from pilot projects to large-scale commercialization. This could give the country a new economic growth engine, the report said.

Signs of commercial traction were emerging in March, when Chinese robotics company UBTECH Robotics — a provider of robots to automaker Dongfeng Liuzhou Motor Co — said that Dongfeng would roll out 20 industrial humanoid robots, with full deployment expected during the first half of this year.

Xie Shaofeng, chief engineer at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a news conference last week that mainstream humanoid robots in China "are increasingly being deployed in manufacturing scenarios — assisting on auto production lines and supporting smart sorting and logistics".

China-built seaplane gets type certificate

The AG600 can collect 12 tons of water within 20 seconds, rescue 50 people during mission

By ZHAO LEI

zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The AG600, China's domestically developed seaplane, received its type certificate on Sunday from the Civil Aviation Administration of China, clearing the way for its delivery.

At an issuance ceremony at Aviation Industry Corp of China's Beijing headquarters, Hu Zhenjiang, deputy head of the aviation administration, conferred the type certificate, which certifies the plane model's design, to Wei Yingbiao, general manager of AVIC, developer of the aircraft and the country's leading aircraft manufacturer.

This means the AG600, the world's largest and heaviest amphibious aircraft, has cleared a long list of stringent tests and gained permission to enter the market, AVIC said.

Cheng Zhihang, a senior engineer at AVIC General Huanan Aircraft Industry Co, said after the ceremony that the model's prototypes conducted as many as 2,167 test flights totaling 4,931 hours. The flight tests took place in many places in the country, including Guizhou, Sichuan and Hainan provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

His company is an AVIC subsidiary in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, and is responsible for the AG600 project.

"So far, we have received orders for six AG600s from two buyers. Deliveries are expected to begin in August," he said, noting that there are talks going on with local governments and companies.

"The seaplane can help in many operations such as air-based rescue, firefighting and artificial weather modification," Cheng said.

The AG600 is China's second amphibious aircraft model after the SH-5, which was developed in the 1970s for military purposes and has long been retired from service.

It is one of three large-size aircraft to emerge from the nation's ambi-

tious effort to become a top-tier player in the global aviation sector, joining the Y-20 strategic transport plane and the C919 narrow-body jetliner. Both the Y-20 and the C919 have entered active service.

Development of the AG600 was approved by the central government in June 2009 and began in September that year. Tens of thousands of researchers and engineers from 312 domestic institutes, enterprises and universities across the nation took part in the program. Construction of the first prototype began in March 2014 and was completed in July 2016.

The AG600 made its debut flight in December 2017 in Zhuhai, taking off from and landing at an airport. Ten months later, it carried out its first water-based takeoff and landing on the Zhanghe Reservoir in Jingmen, Hubei province. In July 2020, the seaplane conducted its first sea-based test flight on the Yellow Sea.

Over the past several years, four prototypes were built to undergo various kinds of tests across the country to verify the flying boat's capabilities and compliance with airworthiness standards.

With a length of 38.9 meters and a wingspan of 38.8 meters, the AG600 is roughly the size of a Boeing 737. It will be the world's biggest operating amphibious aircraft, surpassing Japan's ShinMaywa US-2 and Russia's Beriev Be-200.

The plane has a maximum take-off weight of 60 metric tons, an operational ceiling — the maximum altitude at which it can fly safely and efficiently — of 7.6 kilometers and a maximum operational range of 4,500 km.

The aircraft is designed for both ground- and water-based takeoffs and landings. It is capable of rescuing 50 people during a maritime search and rescue mission. In a typical firefighting operation, it can collect 12 tons of water from a lake or sea within 20 seconds and use it to douse fires over an area of about 4,000 square meters, designers said.

Growth: Social security reforms to fuel consumption

From page 1

Consumption has become the main driving force behind China's economic growth. Last year, the final consumption expenditure contributed 44.5 percent to the nation's GDP growth, surpassing investment and exports, and drove a 2.2 percentage point increase in GDP, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said it would be "a brilliant idea" for China to take bigger reform steps to transfer more State-owned capital to the social security system, in order to enhance migrant workers' benefits as a key means to driving consumption growth.

"China is trying something new — a more proactive fiscal policy with a greater focus on consumption," he said, adding that about one-fourth of this year's increment in augmented fiscal deficit, worth around 2 tril-

lion yuan, will be spent on consumption-related areas such as subsidizing an expanded consumer goods trade-in program and boosting social welfare.

Xing said that apart from short-term consumption subsidies, the more fundamental solution lies in social security reforms, such as offering easier access to public housing and healthcare for migrant workers, which will reduce their precautionary saving habits and unleash huge consumption potential.

According to the 2025 Government Work Report, China will double its ultra-long-term special treasury bonds earmarked for expansion of the consumer goods trade-in program to 300 billion yuan this year, amid a broader drive to boost domestic demand and spur economic growth.

Jia Shaoqian, chairman of Chinese home appliance manufacturer Hisense Group, said the country's trade-in program has not only stim-

ulated the consumer market and bolstered consumption upgrades, but has also significantly promoted the green transformation of the home appliance industry, while improving people's quality of life.

In order to further stimulate the purchasing appetite of consumers, Li Gang, director of the department of market operation and consumption promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, underscored that more efforts will be made to accelerate the development of service-based consumption.

Efforts will also be made to nurture diversified purchasing scenarios and new types of consumption in the digital, green and intelligent fields, Li added.

Zou Yunhan, deputy director of the Macroeconomic Research Office at the State Information Center's Department of Economic Forecasting, said that China's consumption market is poised for steady growth

this year fueled by a series of supportive measures.

Zou highlighted that new business forms and new models related to consumption can better meet people's demand for consumption, upgrading and motivating their purchasing enthusiasm, which in turn will provide fresh momentum and robust support for the sustained growth of the consumer market.

Hideki Ozawa, executive vice-president of Japanese tech company Canon, said, "We are confident that with the support of national consumption promotion policies, we can return to the golden era of the camera market."

China's focus on consumption-led growth serves as a powerful driver of economic stability and will contribute to the country's overall economic recovery, Ozawa added.

Contact the writers at fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn



China's domestically developed seaplane AG600 takes part in an exercise on Oct 23, 2023, in Jingmen, Hubei province. The aircraft obtained its type certificate on Sunday from the Civil Aviation Administration of China in Beijing, marking its successful development and approval to enter the market. YUE SHUHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Finance: Initiatives offer alternatives to West-dominated frameworks

From page 1

This contrasts with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which have been criticized for imposing structural adjustments and favoring Western voting power. The NDB's focus on mutual respect and shared interests empowers developing countries to pursue infrastructure and sustainable development without political strings.

Since 2015, the NDB has approved over \$30 billion in loans for renewable energy, urban development and transport projects. Notable examples include a \$500 million loan to Brazil for flood prevention and renewable energy initiatives in India and South Africa, addressing infrastructure gaps while reducing reliance on Western financial systems. These projects often incorporate climate resilience frameworks, aligning with global sustainability goals.

The AIIB, with over 100 member countries including European states, highlights China's ability to rally global support for a new financial order. Prioritizing efficiency over bureaucracy, the AIIB has financed more than 200 projects across Asia, Africa and Europe. By targeting infrastructure and sustainability, the AIIB fills gaps neglected by Western institutions, while its lean operational model minimizes delays, enabling rapid disbursement of funds during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

China's initiative extends beyond multilateral banks. It has gradually opened domestic financial markets, allowing foreign firms such as JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs and BlackRock to establish wholly owned subsidiaries. This integration into global markets is paired with the internationalization of the renminbi. The RMB's inclusion in the IMF's Special Drawing Rights bas-

ket in 2016 marked a milestone in its ascent as a global reserve currency. Currency swap agreements with Argentina, Pakistan and Nigeria facilitate RMB-based trade, while NDB and AIIB bonds issued in local currencies, such as the rand and the rupee, promote financial multipolarity, reducing dollar dependency. Also, China's cross-border interbank payment systems further challenge the SWIFT network's dominance.

China's State-owned banks, such as the Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, have expanded globally, with ICBC operating in over 40 countries. These institutions finance the Belt and Road Initiative projects, which channel AIIB and NDB funds into infrastructure across the Global South. Launched in 2013, the BRI has mobilized over \$1 trillion for roads, railways, ports and energy projects in more than 140

countries, becoming one of history's largest infrastructure programs. Projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Port of Piraeus in Greece illustrate the BRI's geopolitical and economic reach and enhancement of trade connectivity.

China's debt restructuring approach further distinguishes it from Western counterparts. When Zambia defaulted in 2022, China offered flexible terms in stark contrast to the IMF's rigid conditions. These pragmatic renegotiations reflect a willingness to adapt rather than enforce harsh repayment terms. Critics cite "debt-trap diplomacy" risks, yet empirical evidence suggests China prioritizes renegotiation over coercion, as seen in Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port case, where debt-for-equity swaps preserved sovereignty while stabilizing finances.

Beyond infrastructure, China's

financial program includes establishing RMB clearing hubs in London, the United Kingdom, Frankfurt, Germany, and Singapore, advancing the currency's role in global trade. These hubs streamline transactions for multinational corporations, reducing exchange risks and fostering RMB-denominated investment. As Western institutions face governance challenges and geopolitical fragmentation, China's investments in alternative financial structures signal a shift toward multipolarity.

By creating institutions that emphasize equity, efficiency and sustainability, China is not merely challenging existing systems but reshaping the foundations of global economic governance. This transition reflects broader aspirations for a multipolar world where developing nations gain greater agency, reducing historical asymmetries in the international financial architec-

ture. While debates over debt sustainability and geopolitical influence persist, China's pragmatic, flexible approach offers developing countries alternatives to West-dominated frameworks, accelerating the emergence of a more inclusive global order.

As the AIIB and NDB expand their portfolios and the BRI deepens connectivity, China's financial policy increasingly intertwines with global development priorities. The rise of these institutions, alongside the RMB's growing prominence, illustrates a deliberate reimagining of financial power that prioritizes collaboration over dominance and seeks to address systemic inequities. Ultimately, China is not only expanding its influence but also catalyzing a structural evolution in how the world finances growth, manages risk and shares prosperity.

The author is executive director of South-South Dialogues, a Nairobi-based development communications think tank. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Russians find successful treatment across border

By LIU MINGTAI and ZHOU HUIYING in Changchun

After treatment at Hanyijiu Moxibustion Clinic in Hunchun, a city on the Chinese-Russian border in Jilin province, Irina Kostyrko found great relief from her back pain.

Kostyrko, a 69-year-old from Ussuriysk, Russia, visits Hunchun twice a year for moxibustion therapy.

"I have suffered from sciatic nerve pain and lumbar spinal stenosis for quite a long time," she said.

On the recommendation of a friend, she began to try moxibustion treatment in Hunchun in May 2021, and the effect has been "particularly good."

"In many regions of Russia, where the weather is cold, many people suffer from bone and joint diseases," she said. "Traditional Chinese medicine therapies, such as massage, acupuncture and moxibustion, which are gentle and effective, have become the most popular choice in recent years."

Seeking medical treatment in Hunchun has also become popular among residents in her city, she said. "This time, I invited my husband to come together to treat his knee osteoarthritis and insomnia."

During the day, Kostyrko and her husband visit tourist attractions and go shopping.

Han Shiming, manager of the clinic, has become quite busy.

"Every year, we receive over 1,000 Russian tourists, with some coming from as far as Moscow and St. Petersburg," he said. "Most of them came specifically seeking treatment for illnesses such as cervical spondylosis and frozen shoulder."

Affordable prices, high-quality services and attentive care continue to attract Russian tourists.

Apart from TCM, standard medical services are also favored.

At the Hunchun Eurasia Hospital, Russian patients in departments such as internal medicine and dentistry keep the place bustling, with dedicated Russian translators facilitating smooth communication with the doctors. "Sometimes, I treat over 30

Russian patients a day, many of whom are repeat patients," said Chen Xingsheng, deputy director of the hospital.

"Because of the limited visa time, they hope to see curative effects quickly, and China's medical expertise can meet their expectations."

"Others come with complex conditions like cardiovascular diseases and gastrointestinal issues, which need regular follow-ups," he added.

The local government is enhancing tourism infrastructure, strengthening market supervision and improving tourism services.

In 2023, the first five Russian consumer rights protection service stations and an international consumer rights protection service station were put into operation in Hunchun, addressing concerns for Russian tourists.

Customs data shows that last year, the number of inbound and outbound tourists through Hunchun Port reached 667,000.

In late March, more than 40 teenagers from Russia's Amur Oblast arrived in Hunchun to conduct a series of study activities. At the Hunchun TCM Hospital, they gained a close understanding of Chinese medicine culture and traditional Chinese medical techniques.

After visiting the herbal medicine room and experiencing acupuncture and moxibustion, they tasted the hospital's homemade herbal tea and learned the traditional Chinese health exercise *baduanjin*.

During the trip, the Russian teenagers showed a strong interest and enthusiasm for medical culture.

"The study activities allowed Russian youth to have close contact, exchanges and interact with Chinese medical culture and Chinese youth, further enhancing the popularity and influence of TCM and intangible cultural heritage representative projects," Han said.

Han Junhong and Ding Luyang contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn



Medical workers give moxibustion treatment to a Russian patient at a clinic in Hunchun, Jilin province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Liu Xiaojie (middle) teaches Xiangxiu embroidery to a group of students in her workshop in Loudi city, Hunan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Disabled woman finds joy through art

Years of dealing with fragile bones strengthens her determination

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha

zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Liu Xiaojie, who stands under one meter tall with a round, cheerful face, has spent her life defying the odds.

Her life embodies a paradox: fragility and fortitude intertwined. Each stitch in her embroidery carries the weight of her struggles and the brilliance of her triumph. Through cracked bones and broken dreams, she has woven a tapestry of resilience, proving that even the most fragile threads can create something enduring.

Born in 1987 in Loudi city, Hunan province, her story is one of relentless resilience against a genetic condition — osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle bone disease — that shadowed her from infancy.

By the age of three, she experienced her first fracture, and from then on breaks became a cruel routine.

"I lost count of how many times my bones snapped," she said. Simple movements, even sneezing, could trigger fractures, earning her the nickname "Porcelain Doll."

Confined to cycles of hospitalization and homebound recovery, her childhood was marked by isolation and physical agony.

The physical toll of her condition remains ever-present. As a child, the sound of her bones cracking haunted her. "I could 'hear' the fractures and also the cracking sound of doctors setting the bone," she said.

Yet she clung to hope. "I told myself that in seven days, the pain would ease. In a month, it would heal a little more. I was in great pain today and tomorrow, it would ease a bit," she said.

"Moreover, I did not want to die. My parents never gave up on me and I should not give up on myself."

For years, education seemed an impossible dream.

At 15, after her condition stabilized slightly, she finally enrolled in school, clinging to the opportunity



From left: Image of Ne Zha, a mythological figure, embroidered by Liu Xiaojie. Liu embroiders at her workshop in Loudi.



like "a sponge thirsting for water." But wheelchair dependence and limited mobility persisted. Climbing stairs requires gripping railings, a daily exercise she endures to stay active.

She discovered a talent for painting and calligraphy, skills that became her solace. But when her older sister, who carried her to school daily, underwent surgery and could no longer assist her, Liu was forced to drop out at 18.

Despair threatened to consume her until a visiting art teacher recognized her potential and began mentoring her. This mentorship ignited a spark of hope, laying the groundwork for her future in art.

The turning point came in 2009 when she learned of a provincial embroidery training program for people with disabilities. Despite her family's concerns, local authorities intervened, arranging accommodations and support. "Illness closed one door but opened a window — it let me focus entirely on embroidery," she reflected.

For six months, Liu immersed herself in Hunan embroidery, or Xiangxiu, a traditional craft known for its vivid realism. Her dedication paid off: she mastered the craft and joined a company.

Between 2010 and 2019, she clinched multiple awards at provincial and national embroidery competitions, rising to sixth place nationally.

Recognized as a "Loudi Craftsman", she became a city-level inheritor of Xiangxiu.

In 2020, she opened the Ju Girl Xiangxiu Dream Workshop, a studio funded by local authorities and charitable entrepreneurs.

Here, she trains more than 800 apprentices, most of whom are disabled, offering free classes to empower others.

"I want to pass on this craft so more disabled friends can stand firm in society," she said.

Her work ethic is unwavering. In her early years, she embroidered up to 10 hours daily.

Now, managing the workshop limits her time, but she still dedicates hours each day. To adapt to modern markets, she innovates, combining embroidery with affordable items such as health mallets, hairpins and tote bags priced from dozens to hundreds of yuan.

Collaborations with German buyers — 500-piece orders of embroidered accessories — prove her global appeal. "Young people can't afford traditional pieces, so we create simpler, cheaper designs," she said.

Financially, the venture barely breaks even. "With more people relying on me, the pressure grows," she said. Yet, her focus remains on legacy, not profit.

At 38, unmarried and consumed by her craft, she harbors no regrets. "I'm lucky — I've realized my dream," she said.

Her gratitude extends to the community: "Without societal support, I couldn't have done this."

Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

XINHUA

Robots comfort seniors at care center

CHONGQING — A new type of robot has landed a job at an eldercare service center in Chongqing, thanks to its knack for handling the complex emotional needs of seniors.

The First Social Welfare Home of Chongqing described Peipei, the robot, as gentle, patient and good at listening and an eloquent caregiver. "If you have any questions, just ask Peipei. She can answer anything," said an 86-year-old senior in the home, who gave her surname as Wang. The resident has often interacted with the robot, from chatting to playing games, or even asking Peipei to take photos of her and remove any signs of aging in them.

Wang said Peipei is emotionally exquisite, not only answering questions, but also taking the initiative to care about her. For example, the robot can notice when she hasn't been sleeping well or is in a bad mood. The robot comforts her, reminding her that her granddaughter, who is studying abroad, might not be able to visit often, but she makes a video call every week.

Peipei's name is a Chinese homophone of companionship, said Xiang Guohui, a senior algorithm engineer with Mashang Consumer Finance Co, the developer of the robot. He said the company integrates cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and psychology and uses a multi-modal emotional large model, giving her the ability for intelligent emotional companionship, health and safety protection, entertainment and leisure services, and life assistance management.

Xiang said the company's research team found that the demand for emotional companionship ranks top for people in senior homes.

Should senior residents struggle with memory and repeat themselves, Peipei tirelessly provides feedback. "For the seniors who enter care homes, loneliness could lead to isolation. Appropriate intervention is needed in such cases," said Liu Min, vice-president of the care home.

She said it was impossible for nursing staff to meet the emotional and psychological needs of every senior resident all the time, while the robot can provide companionship for them 24 hours a day. "The value of eldercare robots is not just to assist the seniors in their lives, but also to provide a window for them to get in touch with new technologies and keep up with the development of digital society," said Liu, adding that many senior people took the initiative to learn more about humanoid robots and AI technology after Peipei appeared in their life.

"Eldercare robot technology is still in its infancy. With the comprehensive breakthrough of humanoid robots, they can work in all scenarios in the field of eldercare," Xiang said.

By the end of last year, there were more than 6 million people age 65 and above in Chongqing, accounting for 18.9 percent of the city's permanent population. The municipal government has actively explored measures to develop an "intelligent system for senior care services."

XINHUA

Chinese researchers make breakthrough with immune cells

SHENZHEN — Chinese scientists have made a discovery about immune cells that opens possible new pathways for treating neurological diseases such as developmental disorders, nerve injury, abnormal pain and viral nerve infections.

The research team at the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences confirmed the existence of microglia — a type of immune cell — in the peripheral nervous system, which is composed of all the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. Microglia were previously only

detected in the brain and spinal cord, known as the central nervous system.

This breakthrough provides novel insights into the development of the peripheral nervous system.

The study was published in the latest issue of Cell.

An international reviewer commented: "This is a very important new discovery and frameshift in our understanding. Prior to this, we assumed there were no microglia-like cells outside the CNS (central nervous system)."

Immune cells play significant roles in embryonic development,

organ formation, maintaining body stability and influencing disease occurrence and progression. Microglia, a subset of tissue resident immune cells discovered in 1919, have been thought to exist solely within the CNS, scientists explained.

However, a 2023 study by a team led by researcher Li Hanjie, also published in Cell, discovered microglia in human fetal skin, testicle and heart tissues.

"Initially, we observed microglia in non-CNS tissues but could not confirm their presence in the PNS (peripheral nervous system). This

uncertainty drove over a year of rigorous investigation," said Wu Zhisheng, first author of the latest Cell paper.

The team's experiments included humans, monkeys and pigs, and they collected biological samples from wild and farmed sources and developed a novel research framework. Their efforts conclusively verified the existence of PNS microglia.

"PNS microglia are absent in small vertebrates like mice and rats, which have long served as primary model animals for scientific research. This may explain why

these cells remained undetected until now," said Li, the study's corresponding author.

The research leveraged cutting-edge infrastructure, including Shenzhen's major synthetic biology and brain science facilities, as well as the facility for phenotypic and genetic analysis of model animals at the Kunming Institute of Zoology of the CAS.

The discovery may reshape understanding of various PNS-related disorders. For instance, dysfunctions of these PNS microglia cells may contribute to congenital PNS defects during fetal development. It

XINHUA

Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

By ZHAO RUINAN in Yugan, Jiangxi
zhaorunan@chinadaily.com.cn

Poyang Lake in southern China has long been a critical rest area for migrating birds, not least the Siberian crane as it makes its way from northern breeding grounds in the Siberian tundra to winter in China thousands of kilometers south.

However, due to the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, the wetlands along the Siberian crane's migration routes have been degraded, resulting in a loss of habitat and food for the critically endangered species.

Siberian cranes are dependent on wetlands throughout their life cycle, using their shallow water for nesting, feeding and roosting.

The reduced water level in Poyang Lake, China's largest freshwater lake, in recent years has also meant a reduction in wetlands. This has taken away crucial nesting areas and food sources for Siberian cranes.

Like a domino effect, this has meant that migrating cranes have taken to the farmland around the lake for food, upsetting the local farmers.

Farmyard flock

As midday approached on Oct 16, 2020, Yao Tianle and several colleagues were patrolling farmland near the Poyang Lake Basin when he suddenly noticed a large number of Siberian cranes feeding on rice in a nearby paddy field.

Yao had just been appointed Party secretary of Chaqizhou Reclamation Farm, a branch of the Kangshan Reclamation Farm in Yugan county, Jiangxi.

It was the first time he'd seen so many Siberian cranes foraging in farmland. He immediately called the local wildlife protection station.

Lei Xiaoyong, then director of the wildlife protection station, quickly arrived on the scene. They reported the situation to the higher authorities.

The local government and forestry department took the matter seriously and decided to compensate farmers for their losses.

"At first, the farmers were unwilling to accept the situation. When they saw the migratory birds, they would try to drive them away. Then, village officials would intervene and provide compensation according to regulations," Yao said.

From 2020 onward, during the wintering season for migratory birds, which typically lasts from mid-October to March, the number of birds at Chaqizhou has continually increased.

Siberian cranes are revered as "living fossils" with a globally rare population. In China, they are classified as first-class protected wildlife.

Poyang Lake serves as a primary wintering habitat for cranes and various other migratory birds. Each year, hundreds of thousands of migratory birds flock to the lake for the winter.

According to a survey conducted by Beijing Forestry University from December 2021 to February 2022, the global wintering population of cranes in China was about 5,600.

Among them, approximately 4,800 wintering cranes were recorded at Poyang Lake, accounting for 85.7 percent of the total.

Lei said he believes the increase of cranes and other migratory birds from the protected wetland of Poyang Lake into farmlands has been influenced by extreme weather conditions in the past years.

"The birds mainly fed on the winter buds of submerged plants such as tape grass found in shallow waters and mud flats," he said.

"However, extreme weather affects the hydrology of Poyang Lake. For instance, droughts can reduce the population of submerged grasses,



Above: Migratory birds gather at a pond of foxnuts near the Poyang Lake in Yugan, Jiangxi province, last winter.

Inset: Migratory birds feed and play at the Chaqizhou Reclamation Farm in Yugan last winter. PHOTOS BY YUAN WENBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Siberian cranes adapt to climate change

As droughts, floods hit Poyang Lake, endangered birds take to farms as food source

threatening the birds' food source. In contrast, during floods, water can submerge their food, prompting them to venture into farmlands in search of food," Lei said.

In 2020, a cold wave influenced migration patterns, causing migratory birds to arrive earlier.

Coupled with high water levels in Poyang Lake and prolonged periods of flooding, the growth of winter buds of tape grass was severely impacted.

As a result, birds began frequenting the surrounding rice fields.

In recent years, during the winter months, large numbers of migratory birds have increasingly been spotted in lakeside areas and even deeper into farmlands.

Besides the Kangshan farm, other areas around the lake, such as the Liyuzhou Wuxing Reclamation Farm and Henghu Reclamation Farm in Nanchang, and even locations farther from the lake such as Ruichang and Fengcheng cities, have also seen numerous migratory birds foraging in lotus ponds and rice fields.

In 2022, Poyang Lake experienced severe drought, leading to vast wetlands drying up, soil cracking, vegetation dying, and a decrease in bird habitats and food sources.

That year, at the Liyuzhou Wuxing Reclamation Farm, farmers saw hundreds of migratory birds entered farmlands, leaving less than about 200 out of some 670 hectares of rapeseed fields untouched.

Climate woes

Dai Nianhua, vice-president of the Ecological Society of Jiangxi Province, has been conducting hydrological and biodiversity research at Poyang Lake for many years.



Two oriental storks, listed as first-class protected wildlife, are released to a wetland habitat at Poyang Lake in Jiangxi province in January last year. ZHUO ZHONGWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

According to his observations, starting over a decade ago, the growth of submerged plants in Poyang Lake has been inhibited by the dual impact of summer floods and autumn droughts, leading migratory birds to increasingly forage in artificial wetlands such as lotus ponds and farmlands around Poyang Lake.

"The deteriorating natural habitats for migratory birds create difficulties in finding food. Birds cannot survive without food, so they are forced to seek sustenance in artificial wetlands and rice fields," he said.

"In the 1980s and 1990s, Poyang Lake was designated a national wetland protection area, along with several other protected zones. However, since the 21st century, there have been significant changes in the hydrology of Poyang Lake. Drought conditions have gradually become particularly severe," he added.

Kangshan farm has set aside 67 hectares of rice fields for birds in winter.

The local government has hired dozens of caretakers to monitor 17 bird and wetland sites across the area.

Several regions around Poyang Lake have also begun to provide food for migratory birds. For example, the lotus pond set aside for migratory birds in Liyuzhou has expanded from over 20 hectares in 2016 to over 70 hectares in 2022.

Lei emphasized that providing food for migratory birds is a "critical measure to address their immediate needs when they lack food, serving as a protective project".

"Around eight or nine years ago, some cranes migrated to Wuyuan county and died. Upon examination, it was discovered that their intestines were empty and they had almost no body fat. This indicated a severe food shortage at that time," he said.

Since 2014, Jiangxi has been implementing wetland ecological protection compensation for those who suffer economic losses created by migratory birds.

According to data from the Jiangxi Provincial Forestry Department, over the past decade, Jiangxi has invested over 375 million yuan (\$51.4 million) in wetland ecological protection compensation, covering over 10,900 hectares of damaged crops.

Tourism boom

Meanwhile, with more migratory birds and increased tourism, areas surrounding Poyang Lake have experienced a rise in income.

Since the launch of the third Poyang Lake International Bird Watching Season in November 2023, Chaqizhou has welcomed a

total of 500,000 visitors, generating 50 million yuan in tourism revenue.

Jiang Liangqing, a Chaqizhou farmer and bird protection volunteer, said that the period from October to March is his busiest time of year.

"I patrol every day, ensuring that the environment for the migratory birds is safe. During the bird-watching season, there are many tourists, and I also help maintain order," he said.

About 10 years ago, he became the head of a local rice planting cooperative, and the 67 hectares of rice fields set aside for the birds belong to this cooperative.

"With more migratory birds and visitors, it has become easier to sell our rice. The growth of bird-watching tourism has also increased local farmers' incomes. Each household's annual income can increase by about 1,000 yuan," the 56-year-old said.

"Additionally, bird droppings act as organic fertilizer, enriching the land they feed on, making spring plowing the next year more efficient."

Chaqizhou has a total of 41 households, and 21 of them have joined Jiang's cooperative, serving as rice field bases for their products.

One of the participants, Hu Xinghua, owns over 6.7 hectares of land.

Hu said that in recent years, any losses incurred when migratory birds feed on their crops have been compensated by the government.

With more tourists visiting, his income has also increased. During peak tourist seasons, he sometimes helps manage bird-watching activities, earning over 100 yuan a day.

"People's attitudes have also changed. Previously, they despised migratory birds, but now they understand the importance of protecting them and are happy to see their arrival," he said.

Jiang said that in the past, people would have to be at least 800 meters away to see the cranes.

"Now, when the cranes come, they realize we won't harm them. They remain calm and feed peacefully, even when we are just tens of meters away."

However, as humans and birds come closer together, experts have raised concerns.

In 2022, Wang Wenjuan, a migratory bird expert and associate professor at Beijing Forestry University, analyzed survey data from the Liyuzhou Wuxing Reclamation Farm.

She suggested in a paper: "Given that the rice fields around Poyang Lake contain abundant scattered rice grains, it is advisable to reduce the amount of artificially provided food. This will encourage Siberian cranes to disperse into the surrounding rice fields and lower the potential risk of disease transmission."

The study indicated that the birds' diet and behavioral habits show their presence in artificial habitats is often a last resort, as "their natural habitats are currently unable to provide sufficient food for the cranes". In this situation, supplementary feeding further encourages their aggregation.

Dai agreed, saying that reserving rice for the birds is an emergency measure to cope with climate change.

Unless extreme weather conditions occur or essential conditions are met, the continuous increase in the quantity of reserved rice should not be promoted, he said.

The researcher believes that the current food model can continue as it is, but he recommends avoiding more supplementation to "increase opportunities for migratory birds to forage independently in the wild".

"The key is to restore the balance of the Poyang Lake ecosystem and ensure that their original habitats — the wetland conservation areas — offer sufficient food. The migratory birds will naturally return to their rightful places," he said.

Raised awareness helps safeguard protected species

By ZHAO RUINAN

Before migratory birds arrive every October, Yuan Wenbin and his pals from the Kangshan Reclamation Farm patrol team in Yugan county, Jiangxi province, distribute leaflets to educate local farmers on the importance of not harming these birds.

In recent years, a large number of migratory birds have wintered near the reclamation farm not far from Poyang Lake, China's largest freshwater lake. Last year the number climbed to more than 100,000, according to Wu Minyao, executive head of the reclamation farm.

Initially, local villagers were concerned that the birds would damage their rice fields, prompting them to set off firecrackers or use harmful



methods to scare the birds away. Yuan and his team intervened, educating farmers on safer alternatives. For example, during the day, farmers can set up long bamboo poles with reflective tape in their fields to deter birds. At night, they can use flashlights to scare them away.

Farmers gradually developed the awareness of protecting migratory birds, and they no longer harm them in the fields, Yuan said.

As the captain of a local ecological protection patrol team, the 54-year-

old and his teammates are responsible for safeguarding the farm and its surrounding environment, which provides a habitat for finless porpoises and migratory birds in winter.

"When the wintering season for migratory birds begins in mid-October, we become busier. We split into two groups and patrol the nearby bird habitats every morning at 7 am, monitoring the number and species of birds. We also patrol at night," Yuan said.

In 2021, fishing was completely banned in Poyang Lake. However, Yuan has encountered individuals suspected of illegal fishing.

"One time, I saw a group of about a dozen people fishing near the finless porpoise habitat. They drove off in off-road vehicles and were very

confrontational," he recalled.

With just one or two teammates with him, he attempted to stop them and took a photo of their license plates. However, they threatened him, forcing him to delete the picture.

"After I deleted the photo, they left. As soon as they were far enough away, we called the police," he said.

Yuan often faces such incidents, which is a significant reason his family is concerned about his safety and well-being while continuing his patrol work. Despite their worries, he has never considered leaving the team since joining it in 2017.

"I grew up here. In my childhood, the water in nearby Daming Lake was clear, with visibility up to 2 meters underwater. Over time, the water quality severely declined, and ditches

became foul-smelling. It wasn't until the past decade that the water quality began to improve," Yuan said. "Now it's much better."

Jiangxi province initiated a project in the early 1980s aimed at comprehensive management of the entire basin in the province, including Poyang Lake.

Following a severe flood in 1998, the local government implemented measures such as afforestation, returning farmland to forests and restoring lakes, gradually bringing back the natural ecosystem that had been damaged by earlier reclamation and farming practices.

In 2018, Jiangxi made significant strides in advancing its 10 Major Actions Plan for the ecological management of Poyang Lake Basin.

Yuan's decision to join the patrol team was also influenced by his concern for the finless porpoises of the lake.

In February 2017, while on patrol, he and volunteers discovered an injured finless porpoise with large anchor hooks embedded in its back before it swam away.

Despite a weeklong search and rescue operation involving nearly 100 people, including local officials and volunteers, they were unable to find the porpoise. "It was highly unlikely that it survived," Yuan said.

This rescue operation strengthened his resolve to join the patrol team "to protect the local ecological environment," he added.

"Now, more migratory birds are arriving at Chaqizhou farmlands, and our workload is increasing. The government has provided us with vehicles and boats for patrolling in the past years, but it's still not enough.

"In the future, I hope that there can be more support to further improve the local ecological environment," he said.

WORLD

Iran-US nuke discussions move to 'technical phase'

By CUI HAIPEI
in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

The "constructive" negotiations between Iran and the United States on Saturday in Rome will advance to the "expert level" on Wednesday in Oman apart from resuming discussions this coming Saturday, Iranian officials said, signaling mutual understanding on the framework.

Rome talks at the Omani embassy marked a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two sides since 1979, as US President Donald Trump seeks to secure a rapid deal to halt Iran's nuclear development program while threatening military action against it.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described the four-hour meeting as "good and forward-moving", saying negotiations would move to the next phase with technical talks held at the "expert level" on Wednesday in Oman.

"This time we managed to reach a better understanding on a series of principles and goals," he told Iran's state TV after the talks.

On Saturday, Araghchi and US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff spoke indirectly — with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi shuttling between them in different rooms. The two would conduct a third round of indirect talks on Saturday back in Oman's capital Muscat and discuss the result of the experts' work on a framework for a potential new deal.

A senior US official later confirmed the "very good progress" and that the two sides agreed to meet again this week. The Rome meeting followed a preliminary round in Muscat on April 12.

Busaidi appreciated "the constructive approach" of both sides and said the talks are gaining momentum, reported the Islamic Republic News Agency of Iran.

A spokesperson for Omani's Foreign Ministry said that dialogue and clear communication remain essential to achieving "a mutually credible agreement and understanding for the benefit of all concerned regionally and internationally."

The talks came after Trump wrote to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, requesting that negotiations be opened into a deal between Tehran and Washington. Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the

US from a 2015 six-nation nuclear agreement with Iran.

A senior Iranian official on Friday listed the country's red lines as never agreeing to dismantle its uranium enriching centrifuges, halt enrichment altogether or reduce its enriched uranium stockpile below levels agreed in the 2015 deal, IRNA reported.

Before the Rome talks, Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Khamenei, wrote on X that Iran would not accept giving up its enrichment program as with Libya, or agreeing to using uranium enriched abroad for its program. "Iran has come for a balanced agreement, not a surrender," he said.

Araghchi said a deal was "likely" if Washington refrained from making excessive and unrealistic demands, without elaborating.

Ties with Saudi Arabia

Earlier, while Araghchi met Russia's president and foreign minister in Moscow on Thursday and Friday, Saudi Arabia's defense minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, visited Tehran and delivered a personal message from the kingdom to Khamenei. He also met Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Iran's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Alireza Enayati described the visit of Khalid as a key milestone in deepening regional cooperation and advancing Iran-Saudi Arabia relations.

In an interview with news website Asharq Al-Awsat, he said the region is in urgent need of greater solidarity and collaboration among countries — particularly between Tehran and Riyadh. "Security and stability in the region can only be achieved through joint efforts by all regional nations. It's time they come together and shape their future with their own hands," he said.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu affirmed his commitment on Saturday to preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, declaring he would not waver in that effort.

"I'm committed to preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. I will not give up on this, I will not let go of it, and I will not retreat from it — not even by a millimeter," he said in a televised statement.

Xinhua and Agencies contributed to this story.



Zhao Baixiao, a professor at the School of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, performs pulse diagnosis during the Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture Open Day event at the Chinese embassy in Washington DC on Saturday. ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY

Envoy: TCM window on trade

Xie Feng: Traditional Chinese medicine 'offers useful references' for moving beyond tariff war

By ZHAO HUANXIN
in Washington
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

The principles of traditional Chinese medicine offer valuable insights into resolving the escalating tariff or trade war between the world's two largest economies, a situation that China will "face fearlessly", Beijing's top envoy in Washington has said.

"Emphasizing addressing both the symptoms and root causes and strengthening the foundation while nourishing the source, TCM offers useful references for moving beyond tariff war and trade war," Ambassador Xie Feng said at the Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture Open Day event at the embassy on Saturday.

Xie likened international trade disputes to health issues that require long-term care, warning that short-term remedies — or prescriptions imposed on others for one's own illness — could worsen the situation.

To illustrate his point, Xie said global growth has stalled not because of external threats but because of internal stagnation.

"The main reason why global growth has hit a bottleneck is because it lacks momentum," he said. "So instead of fighting over the existing turf, a wiser solution will be

making the pie bigger from a long-term perspective."

The ambassador's remarks follow reports that the White House claimed Chinese imports to the US face tariffs of up to 245 percent. Beijing responded that it would ignore the US "tariff numbers game" and "fight to the end" to protect its rights and interests.

On Thursday, China's Ministry of Commerce said China has maintained communications with its US counterparts, a statement that seemed to have been confirmed by US President Donald Trump, who told reporters on Friday that "we have nice conversations going with China".

Xie cautioned against the detrimental effects of protectionist policies, drawing historical parallels to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which is widely regarded as having exacerbated the Great Depression.

"Tariff barriers would clog the flow of international trade and devastate the health of the world economy," he said. "Tributaries will dry up when there is no water in the main river."

Highlighting the interconnectedness of global economies, Xie noted that weaponizing interdependence would only lead to self-isolation and backfire.

He advocated for a cooperative approach that focuses on expanding

the global economic pie, instead of "fighting over the existing turf".

Drawing further analogies from TCM, Xie emphasized the importance of harmony and balance, akin to the concept of balancing the opposing forces of yin and yang.

"A good traditional Chinese medicine recipe usually combines many different ingredients which reinforce one another and create the best medical effect," he said.

"Likewise, the Earth is big enough to accommodate both China and the US. We should pursue peaceful coexistence rather than collide head-on and help each other succeed, rather than get caught in a lose-lose scenario."

Xie highlighted TCM's role in fostering people-to-people exchanges, mentioning acupuncture demonstrations during Nixon's 1972 visit to China and a viral livestream of an American YouTuber who experienced headache relief in three minutes after pulse diagnosis and acupuncture.

Xie also said acupuncture is legally recognized in 47 US states and in Washington DC. Also, a growing number of Americans are becoming fans of *taijiquan*, *baduanjin* and other traditional Chinese exercises.

Tai chi, or *taijiquan*, in its Chinese name, was placed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. It is a traditional physical practice characterized by relaxed, circular movements synchronized

with breath regulation and cultivating a righteous and neutral mind.

"All these have forged close ties between our people, which should not be cut off," Xie said.

Still, Xie struck a firm tone on China's bottom line. "China firmly opposes tariff war or trade war of any form," he said. "If any country insists on imposing tariff war or trade war on us, we will definitely face it fearlessly and take resolute countermeasures."

He contrasted protectionism with China's recent economic activity, particularly expos and trade fairs, which showed growing foreign interest and investment amid international economic and trade disruptions.

"In the first quarter, China's GDP grew 5.4 percent year-over-year. ... The total value of China's imports and exports in the period set a new record high," he said, adding that more than half of that trade was with Belt and Road Initiative countries.

"All these have testified to the strong resilience and bright prospects of the Chinese economy," he said.

Concluding his speech with an ancient Chinese saying — "The greatest physicians save a country; the second greatest save individuals," Xie said that Chinese civilization advocates promoting the common good of the entire world and benefiting each human being.

"Time has proven and will continue to prove how far China's recipe will go," he said.



Journalists broadcast live outside Oman's embassy in Rome, Italy, on Saturday, as the second round of Iran-United States nuclear talks gets underway. ALESSIA PIERDOMENICO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Ukraine says will observe Russia's Easter ceasefire

KYIV — Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday his forces would observe a 30-hour Easter truce announced by Russia set to last until midnight on Sunday.

However, just hours after the order was meant to have come into effect, air-raid sirens sounded in Ukraine's capital Kyiv and Zelensky accused Russia of having maintained its artillery fire and assaults on the front line.

Also on Saturday, Russia and Ukraine held a large exchange of prisoners, each side saying they had handed back more than 240 captured fighters.

The order to halt all combat over the Easter weekend followed a United States announcement that it could abandon peace talks within days unless Moscow and Kyiv showed they were serious about negotiating.

"Today from 1800 (1500 GMT Saturday) to midnight Sunday (2100 GMT Sunday), the Russian side announces an Easter truce," Russian President Vladimir Putin

said in televised comments during a meeting with the Russian chief of the general staff.

Zelensky responded by saying Ukraine would follow suit, and proposed extending the truce beyond Sunday, saying "30 days could give peace a chance".

"In general, as of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine," Zelensky said on social media.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that Ukraine had broken the Easter ceasefire more than a thousand times, inflicting damages to infrastructure and causing civilian deaths.

The ministry said Ukrainian forces had shot at Russian positions 444 times while it had counted more than 900 Ukrainian drone attacks.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Chinese Language Day celebrated in San Francisco

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
liazhu@chinadailyusa.com

In the reception hall at the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco, 16-year-old Eshaan Nair, in his white kung fu costume with dragon embroidery, demonstrated martial arts techniques honed over seven years of dedicated practice.

Dozens of students, parents and teachers watched in admiration during Saturday's Chinese Language Day celebration, where students showcased their appreciation for Chinese language and culture through various performances.

From playing traditional Chinese musical instruments and singing Chinese pop songs to presenting a fashion show or trying their hands at Chinese calligraphy and paper cutting, the young participants brought the rich cultural traditions to life with enthusiasm and skill.

For Nair, a student at James Logan High School, kung fu has become far more than just physical exercise. "I practice kung fu because I am always really interested in martial arts. And when I signed up for the kung fu school, I found that not only do I get new practices, but I also find a new family," he told China Daily.

The discipline required has transformed other aspects of his life. "Showing up to practice every single day is not easy. Once you master that, you are able to do pretty much anything that you put your mind to," Nair said. "After I started kung fu, I found that I was more able to put time and commitment towards things that are most important to me, like families, friends and practicing kung fu."



Students perform a lion dance during Chinese Language Day at the Chinese Consulate General on Saturday in San Francisco. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

The event was held in recognition of Chinese Language Day — established by the United Nations in 2010 and observed annually on April 20. The date was selected from *Guyu* ("rain of millet"), which is the sixth of 24 solar terms in the traditional East Asian calendars, to pay tribute to Cangjie, the legendary inventor of Chinese characters. According to legend, when Cangjie created Chinese characters, the sky rained millet, leading Chinese people to celebrate the day in his honor.

During the celebration, award-winning pieces from an essay contest titled "China in My Eyes" were displayed, offering personal narratives of students' Chinese-learning experiences.

"We launched the Chinese essay contest last year. This regional contest

invited students to share their personal experience and reflections with Chinese language and culture," said Jin Ying, executive director of the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS).

The organizer received more than 200 entries from five states—California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. "Each essay was a heartfelt expression of curiosity and understanding and admiration," said Jin. "Their words are a powerful reminder of why we teach languages — to build bridges, cultivate empathy and inspire connection."

There has been "tremendous growth" of Chinese-language and cultural education in the United States, said Jin. "Over the past few decades, Chinese has emerged as one of the fast-growing world languages

in American K-12 schools," she said. "Today, students across the country, from large urban centers to rural communities, are learning Chinese not just as a language, but as a gateway to understanding, connection and global citizenship."

Chinese Consul General in San Francisco Zhang Jianmin addressed the gathering, highlighting the significance of language learning.

"By celebrating the Chinese Language Day, we are actually celebrating cultural diversity, and by learning Chinese, you will find that it makes you more confident, makes you more well prepared, and gives you the key to open the door of many opportunities," he told the students. "It will enable you to understand better China's ancient history, and it will enable you to know much better the latest progress that is unfolding in China every day."

Zhang noted the importance of respecting cultural diversity while recognizing shared values across civilizations. "Even though we are different in our respective civilization, you will find that we share many fundamental values. Different civilizations share many common values, and these common values need to be promoted," he said.

He then pointed to specific Chinese cultural values that remain relevant today, such as mutual respect and mutual assistance. "By working together, we can bring about a better future. These values are still very relevant today, and I think it still can inspire people to handle things in a better way and try to work together to achieve a better outcome for everybody."

WORLD

Africa veers toward east for economic partnerships

By CHINA DAILY

African countries are likely to reinforce their trade partnerships with China and other emerging markets, as US President Donald Trump's renewed trade protectionism accelerates a strategic rethink across the continent, according to analysts.

Dennis Munene Mwaniki, a policy expert and the executive director of the China-Africa Center at the Africa Policy Institute in Nairobi, said the US tariffs are already influencing strategic conversations in Africa.

"African countries will increasingly turn to China and other emerging markets because they offer more predictable, open trade partnerships at a time when the US is closing its doors," he said.

"African producers facing tougher access to US markets will increasingly look to China's 1.4 billion consumers," Dennis added. "It's a win-win model, unlike what Trump is pushing — a zero-sum approach."

Unlike the US imposition of levies, China has offered zero tariffs and favorable terms to least-developed countries.

Korir Sing'Oei, Kenya's principal secretary for Foreign Affairs, said the imposition of a 10 percent tariff on Kenyan exports to the US will force Kenya to seriously consider diversification in its trade.

"Our long-term strategy must involve diversified trade partnerships," he said. Sing'Oei said the new tariffs would not take effect immediately, as the US African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, continues to grant tariff-free access to the US market until September this year.

Industry leaders also echoed concerns about the US tariffs with Anthony Mwangi, CEO of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, saying that high local production costs have already limited the competitiveness of Kenyan products.

"Domestic taxes and high production costs make Kenyan products less competitive, even before factoring in new US duties," Mwangi said.

Clear direction sought

The Kenya Private Sector Alliance, on the other hand, is calling for a clear trade policy direction as AGOA's expiry looms. Many African countries fear the act may not be renewed upon expiry, which will deal a serious blow to many African economies.

"The US should seriously consider renewing AGOA to sustain the progress made in trade and investment," said Bimal Kantaria, the alliance's director and chair of the Agriculture Sector Network.

The tariffs are also pushing African countries to prioritize regional integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area, Kantaria added.

Some experts say the tariffs are a wake-up call to Africa as they must stand to build resilience through regional integration.

Lesotho, a small country in southern Africa that was imposed a 50 percent tariff by the US before the 90-day pause, warned of immediate factory closures and massive unemployment if the tariffs came into effect.

"It forces us to seek genuine partners and trade more among ourselves. We can no longer depend on unpredictable markets," Dennis said.

Sharon Nakola in Nairobi, Kenya, contributed to this story.

'Moving' performance



Puppeteers move a cardboard animal in canoes at a floating village in Lagos, Nigeria, on Saturday, as part of "The Herds" moving theater performance which started its journey from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Arctic Circle in a bid to bring attention to climate change. SUNDAY ALABAMA / AP

South Asia faces US' steep tariff challenge

Losses in export earnings will impact employment and growth, experts say

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
vivienxu@chinadailyusa.com

Washington's "reciprocal tariffs" have thrown up serious challenges for South Asian economies where the textile and garment sectors serve as a cornerstone of their economies, experts say.

The tariffs imposed by the United States will not only significantly reduce these South Asian countries' export earnings, but also negatively affect their employment and economic growth rates, they said.

Tahir Farooq, editor-in-chief at Daily Ittehad Media Group and Pakistan Economic Net, said with increased US tariffs disrupting exports and supply chains, the cost of doing business for South Asian manufacturers, particularly the apparel industry, will rise significantly.

"This will not only hurt their competitiveness in the global market but also lead to inflation, job losses, and slow economic growth across the region," he said.

"Rather than encouraging healthy global competition, the US seems more focused on creating artificial barriers."

US President Donald Trump announced a 26 percent "discounted reciprocal tariff" on India on April 2, saying it is nearly half of India's levies on US goods.

At the same time, he slapped a 30 percent tariff on Pakistan's exports, a 37 percent tariff on those from Bangladesh, and an even higher 44 percent tariff on goods from Sri Lanka.

Local media reported that apparel manufacturers in these South Asian countries were shocked by the steep tariff hikes, which will be a heavy blow to the textile industry that constitutes an important part of the economy of these nations.

Even though earlier this month,

Trump abruptly announced a 90-day pause on the sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs he unveiled, exporters from these countries still face major uncertainty.

Bangladesh, for example, ranks as the second-largest producer of ready-made garments in the world, according to the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry, a business network in Bangladesh. The sector contributed over 80 percent of the country's total export earnings and provided job openings for over 4 million workers in 2023, local media reported.

"There will be a huge impact on our garments and leather industry. If the US keeps continuing the tariffs after 90 days, lots of garment industries will be shut down," General Secretary of the Bangladesh Association of Hong Kong Ashfaqur Rahman Palash told China Daily.

The US measures "could significantly hurt exports, particularly the ready-made garments sector, the backbone of Bangladesh's economy," Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, was quoted as saying by the Daily Star of Bangladesh.

Pushing up costs

Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, added: "A tariff hike on Bangladeshi apparel could push up costs for US buyers, potentially leading to fewer orders and shifts in sourcing strategies."

Statistics from Bangladesh's Export Promotion Bureau show the US, as Bangladesh's largest export destination, accounts for 18.7 percent of its total ready-made garment exports.

Sri Lanka's textile exports represent \$4.7 billion of the island nation's earnings in 2024, according to the Joint Apparel Association Forum Sri Lanka. About 40 percent of the country's total

apparel exports, which totals \$1.9 billion, were bound for the US last year.

Ananda Goonatilleke, president of the Sri Lanka-China Friendship Association, said that following the announcement of reciprocal tariffs in early April, cancellations of orders in the garment sector by US buyers have already begun to adversely impact Sri Lankan industries.

He said hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan citizens are in danger of losing their jobs due to the fall-out from the new US tariffs.

As apparel factories face reduced production, shrinking exports, and tightening financial conditions, the livelihoods of ordinary Sri Lankans are now at risk, Goonatilleke added.

Pakistan's textile industry comprises about 8.5 percent of the country's GDP and employs around 40 percent of its labor force, government figures show. In the 2024 fiscal year, the country's textile exports to the US exceeded \$5 billion, accounting for about 90 percent of its total exports to the country.

Aadil Nakhoda, an economist at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, told The Truth International, an English language publication, that the country's textile sector would face huge short-term challenges. He suggested Pakistan should expand textile exports to the European Union and other alternative markets.

Last year, as the largest destination of Indian textile exports, the US accounted for \$10 billion, or 28 percent of the nation's textile exports, according to India's Ministry of Commerce.

"The increased cost of imported textiles in the US market could lead to a contraction in overall demand, as these expenses are potentially passed on to American consumers," Sivaramakrishnan Ganapathi, vice chairman and managing director of Gokaldas Exports, a manufacturer and exporter of apparel, was quoted as saying by India's Economic Times newspaper.

Washington's reliance on China goods highlighted

By SHI GUANG in New York
shiguang@chinadailyusa.com

A wide range of US companies are facing steep losses in revenue amid the reignited trade war, across such key sectors as automobiles, electronics, medicine, clothing, aerospace, agriculture and retail consumer goods.

On April 4, China halted all shipments of seven types of rare earth metals, as Beijing began a new policy of tight export controls on the vital elements in response to US President Donald Trump's steep tariffs imposed two days earlier.

They "could have disastrous consequences for American manufacturing and the military power," The New York Times reported on April 15.

The new trade war has underscored the US' dependence on Chinese imports, analysts note. The "strategic decoupling" of the United States from China, urged on Nov 27, 2024, by Jamieson Greer, who's currently the US Trade Representative, appears increasingly unobtainable to observers.

Stephen Lamar, CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association, told CNBC: "With prohibitively high tariff levels on US imports from China, many companies have no choice but to cancel orders ... new tariff costs are not accurately presented or predictable until the goods arrive at the port, and the high rates are generating bills that can't be paid. That is not a risk or burden small businesses can sustain."

Inflation caused by the tariffs has been predicted to affect US citizens in many aspects of their daily lives. They had been buying many previously affordable household items from Amazon, Walmart, Target and other online stores.

Michael Aziz, an internist and regenerative medicine specialist, was quoted by the UK's Independent on April 11 that the resulting price increases on drugs "will be mostly absorbed by patients, retail pharmacies versus insurance companies."

Aziz said: "The rapid application of those tariffs leaves doctors and patients totally unprepared. Many will skip their meds if they can't afford those generic drugs."

Reacting to China's reciprocal tariffs' impact on Apple iPhones and other US smartphone and computer brands, Trump relented, and on April 11 paused new US tariffs on electronics for 90 days.

Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives said in a post on social media X in early April that "the concept of making iPhones in the US is a nonstarter". Ives estimated that a made-in-China iPhone, which now costs \$1,000, would jump to over \$3,000 if produced in the US.

In a 2024 video of Apple CEO Tim Cook, posted on X on April 11 by a CNBC reporter, he emphasized the irreplaceable nature of Chinese engineering skills and advanced tooling facilities and their concentration in one location as critical to the success of Apple products, more so than the benefit of lower labor costs.

Skills irreplaceable

The reason for Apple's reliance on China, Cook stated, "is because of the skill, the quantity of skill in one location, and the type of skill ... the precision that you have to have in tooling and working with the materials that we do are state of the art."

"And the tooling skill (in China) is very deep. ... In the US, you could have a meeting of tooling engineers, and I'm not sure we could fill the room. In China, you could fill multiple football fields."

The rare-earth export suspension by China has highlighted how much the US has come to rely on uniquely Chinese products to preserve its stated strategic defense needs as well as its economic stability, analysts say.

China is a leader in the mining and processing of valuable metals critical to the manufacture of airplanes, automobiles (both electric and gasoline-fueled), computer chips, LED lights, MRI machines and wind turbines.

The US has only one active rare-earth mining facility, in Mountain Pass, California, US media reported.

"It's not just a capital problem. It's a 'know-how problem' for the US and other countries," said Gracelin Baskaran, research director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies at an online news conference last week.

Baskaran said that US production accounts for less than 1 percent of global rare earths.

It may take five to 10 years for the US to be able to produce the "heavy" types of rare earths needed by the military, said rare-earth expert Luisa Moreno, director of Defense Metal Corp.

An April 14 CSIS report described the Chinese rare-earth restrictions as highlighting vulnerabilities in US military readiness.

Run for cover



People run for cover as a plume of smoke rises above tents at a camp for displaced Palestinians in Khan Younis in Gaza Strip, during an Israeli strike on Saturday. The strikes in Gaza have killed more than 90 people in 48 hours, Gaza's health ministry said, as Israeli troops increased their attacks to pressure Hamas to release the remaining hostages and disarm. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Trump administration's policies spark nationwide rallies

WASHINGTON — Thousands of protesters on Saturday took to the streets in various cities across the United States in what demonstrators described as part of a "National Day of Action" against President Donald Trump's policies and perceived threats to democracy.

Organized on the 250th anniversary of the start of the US Revolutionary War, the demonstrations ranged from marches through midtown Manhattan to rallies outside the White House in Washington, DC, drawing parallels between historical calls for liberty and Saturday's demands for executive accountability.

In New York, people rallied outside the city's main library carrying signs targeting the US president

with slogans like "No Kings in America"; in Chicago, demonstrators chanting "Protect our democracy" marched past City Hall; in San Francisco, participants formed a human banner reading "Impeach & Remove" on Ocean Beach.

Protesters carried signs denouncing rapid deportations of immigrants, mass firings within federal departments, and cuts to Social Security offices, while many also voiced support for transgender rights and stronger climate policies.

"We are in an unprecedented, dangerous situation in the United States," said Raymond Lotta, a political economist and writer.

The Trump administration "is moving quickly to consolidate power; to

carry out its horrible agenda, rounding up immigrants, waging a war on the universities, a war on science. They are shredding the rule of law," he said.

"Trump is doing illegal things, and he should stop," said another demonstrator identifying himself only as George. He held a sign reading "Deport Trump" to express his anger.

'Signs of recession'

Calling the current trade war "unnecessary," Chris, another demonstrator who only gave his first name, said, "Using tariffs is hurting our economy. Especially, it is hurting the world economy. It is causing a lot of disruption across the globe," Chris said.

"We're already seeing the first signs of a recession," said Chris, who held a

sign reading "Tariffs equal recession". Meanwhile, some groups focused on community services, organizing food drives, teach-ins and volunteer work at local shelters.

Political analysts note that Saturday's protests marked the second major mobilization against the Trump administration in April, following an earlier wave on April 5, and reflected deepening grassroots frustration with what participants view as an erosion of checks and balances.

The chief organizer of the protests — the 50501 movement, which represents 50 protests, 50 states and one movement — said some 400 demonstrations were planned.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

x.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These 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, DC.

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108

529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900

San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6R8

Tel: 416-461-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0749-6154) is

published daily except weekends by

China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway,

Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New York,

NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway,

Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No. 1561

BUSINESS

MORE NEWS WHENEVER YOU WANT IT · CHINADAILY.COM.CN/BUSINESS

AI to lift industrial upgrade, growth

Experts say Chinese tech companies must bolster innovation and achieve breakthroughs in AI to enhance nation's core competitiveness in strategic field, beat escalating trade protectionism

By FAN FEIFEI

fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's emphasis on bolstering the application of fast-evolving artificial intelligence technology in a wide range of sectors will advance industrial upgrades and inject fresh momentum into high-quality economic growth, while creating immense business opportunities for multinational corporations to invest in the country, said industry experts and company executives.

Amid a backdrop of sweeping new tariffs by the United States, they said that it is vital for Chinese technology enterprises to bolster innovation and achieve tech breakthroughs in AI, so as to enhance China's core competitiveness in the strategic emerging field globally and navigate challenges from escalating trade protectionism.

Meanwhile, Chinese AI start-up DeepSeek's cost-effective and open-source models serve as a catalyst to accelerate China's adoption of AI, while the country's super-large market, technological prowess and thriving innovation ecosystem underpin its capacity to drive technologies from research labs into the industrial arena, they added.

This year's Government Work Report stated that under the AI Plus initiative, the nation will work to effectively combine digital technologies with its manufacturing and market strengths. China will support the extensive application of large-scale AI models, and vigorously develop new-generation intelligent terminals and smart manufacturing equipment, the report said.

Global market research company International Data Corp said in a report that AI is forecast to contribute \$19.9 trillion to the global economy through 2030, and drive 3.5 percent of global GDP in 2030.

By automating routine tasks and unlocking new efficiencies, AI will have profound economic consequences by reshaping industries, creating new markets and altering the competitive landscape, it noted.

Xu Sitao, chief economist of Deloitte China, said the scale of China's AI sector is expected to have reached 319.4 billion yuan (\$43.7 billion) in 2024, and AI will be applied into various industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, finance, agriculture, retail, logistics and promote the digital and intelligent transformation and upgrading of these industries.

Stefan Hartung, chairman of the board of management at German industrial conglomerate Robert Bosch GmbH, said the company has leveraged AI technology in autonomous driving, home appliance products and factories in China.

"Our Chinese colleagues are very good at that, so they are taking the newest technologies, applying them and inventing new ones, which is a good thing," Hartung said in a recent interview with China Daily, adding that he is bullish on prospects for the application of cutting-edge AI technology in the Chinese market.

He said Bosch has collaborated with many Chinese AI companies,



Top: A technician debugs a humanoid robot at a technology company in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on March 27. LIANG XU / XINHUA

Above left: A visitor experiences a refrigerator, which is connected to the DeepSeek large model, during the 2025 Appliance & Electronics World Expo in Shanghai on March 20. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Above right: A visitor tries a pair of intelligent glasses during the 13th China Information Technology Expo in Shenzhen on April 9. LIANG XU / XINHUA

such as autonomous driving startup WeRide. "There are many other cooperation arrangements we have with AI companies in China, so it makes perfect sense to do this in cooperation."

He hailed China's recent achievements in the AI sector, such as the meteoric rise of DeepSeek, which has stunned the world with its latest reasoning models. "That's a good contribution to the world because an open-source model is always a contribution for many people who do research like we do on AI."

"China definitely has a lot of potential in using AI, and I think going forward, we will also see a lot of applications, maybe in robotics, but maybe in automotives, maybe also core manufacturing operations. So, I think there are a lot of opportunities," he said.

Cui Jingyi, vice-president and general manager of industrial software developer Aveva China, said China is becoming the market with the most extensive application of AI technologies globally, bringing new opportunities for many companies including Aveva.

"We see AI as humanity's tool, an exciting innovation that will help meet the sustainability goals and do more with less. Industrial technolo-

gy, especially AI, can turbo-charge industries' progress toward efficiency and sustainability," Cui said.

For instance, the speed and scale of data analysis will be significantly improved by leveraging AI, which will help companies quickly assimilate new information and boost operational productivity, she said.

The United Kingdom-based company will deepen its cooperation with Chinese industrial enterprises and help them optimize production processes, improve product quality, and reduce energy consumption and costs by leveraging cutting-edge digital technologies including AI.

Cui said she is confident in China's ability to maintain its innovation capacity in breakthrough technologies in future with strong innovation capabilities and broad prospects for AI applications.

China's AI sector will make big strides in the next 10 to 15 years, with its market size reaching 1.73 trillion yuan by 2035, accounting for 30.6 percent of the global total, said market research company CCID Consulting.

China is not only a manufacturing powerhouse, but also a global innovation engine driving trends in digitalization, sustainability and high-

tech industries, said Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy Roland Berger. "What Chinese companies are super good at is usually adopting technology and making it practical."

It is quite critical for foreign companies to continue to invest in technological R&D in China, and there will be a lot of scientific discoveries and disruptions coming into innovation, Depoux said. He noted that AI is progressing very quickly in China, and DeepSeek is just one example as there will be another "DeepSeek" down the road.

"In the past decade, we have seen Chinese companies leapfrogging globally in many industries. China has made rapid progress in the development of AI technology, becoming one of the global leaders, and the pace will further accelerate. AI will unlock massive opportunities for our business," he said.

He said it is noteworthy that all or most of the LLMs of China are open-source. So, basically everybody can use them, including foreign companies, he said, believing that's contributing a lot to the growth of global AI industry, he added.

There is no doubt AI will continue to bring huge opportunities, yet the misuse of AI technology is also capa-

ble of creating serious worldwide risks and challenges.

Depoux said as one of the technology leaders, China should take more responsibility to promote sustainable development of AI technology and tackle challenges for all human beings through global collaboration on governance.

Noting that AI is seamlessly integrating into every facet of industrial development and people's lives, more efforts should be made to strengthen international cooperation to build an open, collaborative and innovative AI industrial ecosystem, said Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of Finance and Economics.

He added that China's inclusive attitude in AI will also help promote the coordinated advancement of the global AI industry.

"China is one of the front-runners in generative AI development in the Asia-Pacific region, and is actively utilizing such cutting-edge technology to modernize various sectors and cultivate talent," said Wu Chun, managing partner of Boston Consulting Group Greater China.

Chinese enterprises have demonstrated unique competitiveness in

the use of AI, Wu said.

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

According to BCG's research, the global AI adoption landscape presents a significant imbalance. Notably, only five economies are categorized as AI pioneers, and the Chinese mainland is among them.

As an AI pioneer, the Chinese mainland has gained a competitive advantage in skills, research and development, ecosystems and investment, and is taking the lead in patents and AI academic papers, the research said.

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

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

The open-source ecosystem and exploration of AI application scenarios are reconstructing the path of tech evolution, she added.

Chinese enterprises are accelerating the adoption of generative AI technology. According to a report from Accenture, 87 percent of surveyed Chinese companies plan to ramp up AI investment in 2025 — a year of rapid change — while 58 percent of the interviewed business executives in China feel that their enterprises' AI development is proceeding faster than expected.

Chinese enterprises' current investment in generative AI is mainly concentrated on core technology infrastructure and data, such as AI platforms, cloud and data management, and talent and skills development, Accenture said in the report.

The report also found that about 85 percent of the interviewed Chinese employees are currently using generative AI-based tools in their work, with 63 percent leveraging these tools for more than a year, and their main purpose is for data analysis. The survey interviewed 790 company executives and 687 employees in 22 industries across the Asia-Pacific region.

Yu Yi, technology lead at Accenture China, said that as companies strive to stay ahead and adapt to fast-changing markets, they are increasingly turning to AI technology to fuel their innovation efforts.

The proportion of Chinese companies stepping up investment and boosting the application of AI is also rising dramatically, Yu said.

He added that Chinese enterprises have sped up digital transformation in their globalization push, with more generative AI technologies having been adopted amid enterprises' efforts to expand their footprint in overseas markets.

Flexible policies bode well for driverless vehicles

REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

Last year, after I completed an interview in Yizhuang, a southern suburb of Beijing, I hailed a robotaxi by using a ride-hailing app on my mobile phone.

All I had to input was the pickup and drop-off points and the number of passengers.

A few minutes later, a self-driving taxi approached, with no driver or safety operator sitting in. The fully driverless vehicle ran smoothly with no shaking or sudden braking.

It could identify stop signs and traffic lights; the vehicle automatically slowed down and finally came to a halt.

As traffic lights changed from red to green, the taxi proceeded through the intersection. Whenever there was a traffic jam, the car automatically switched to the most convenient path.

I think a driverless vehicle is very convenient and safe and that there is no difference between it and cars with human drivers.

This was not the first time that I had experienced self-driving vehicles.

About four years ago, I took a robotaxi with a safety operator sitting behind the steering wheel to monitor the vehicle and take manual control in case of an emergency.

Driverless vehicles have devel-

oped very fast in recent years and become a reality in China, although their operations are still limited to some designated areas of Beijing; Shanghai; Chongqing; Wuhan, Hubei province; and Shenzhen and Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

According to a report by Pacific Securities, the market scale of robotaxis in China is expected to exceed 1.18 trillion yuan (\$161.3 billion) in 2025 and 2.93 trillion yuan in 2030, making it one of the largest application scenarios for autonomous driving technology.

The nation has taken the lead in the research and development as well as application of autonomous driving technology around the world and it is the first country to allow fully driverless robotaxi operations.

Local government support is criti-

cal for promoting the commercial operation of self-driving vehicles.

Currently, over 50 cities nationwide have released autonomous driving pilot demonstration policies and stepped up efforts to expand the application scenarios of self-driving technology, laying a solid foundation for the future operation of driverless vehicles.

Beijing launched China's first pilot area for commercial autonomous driving vehicle services. Chinese tech giant Baidu and self-driving startup Pony.ai were the first enterprises granted permission to offer paid services.

In December 2024, the city approved new regulations for autonomous vehicles. The regulations, which took effect on April 1, encourage and support policies and

measures for technological innovation and industrial development of autonomous vehicles.

Autonomous driving vehicles, particularly robotaxis, are poised to revolutionize transportation by significantly improving driving safety, said Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Baidu at the World Governments Summit 2025 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in February.

"We have proven that robotaxis are much safer than human drivers. As of today, they are at least 10 times safer," Li said. "If you look at our operational record, our insurance claims rate is only one-fourteenth that of regular taxis or a regular driver's car."

The Beijing-based company has invested heavily in developing self-driving technology. Apollo Go, its robotaxi service, is currently operational across 11 cities nationwide.

Continuous testing and operation

on public roads, easing regulations as well as cost reductions in autonomous vehicle manufacturing will help accelerate the deployment and commercialization of self-driving cars, said Lyu Jinghong, an intelligent mobility analyst at research firm BloombergNEF.

According to the BloombergNEF's Electric Vehicle Outlook, China will operate the world's largest robotaxi fleet with about 12 million self-driving vehicles by 2040, followed by the United States with around 7 million such vehicles.

Meanwhile, experts emphasized that ensuring the safety and stability of robotaxis should be a top priority, and more efforts are required to enhance self-driving testing and application scenarios, continuously optimizing algorithms, reduce manufacturing costs of driverless vehicle components, and strengthen the construction of intelligent transportation infrastructure.

BUSINESS



A visitor takes photographs of a 3D screen at the exhibition area of BOE Technology Group Co Ltd during the Display Innovation China Expo in Shanghai on July 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Innovation brightens outlook of display panel industry

Thinner, portable technology boosting demand for advanced OLED products

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese display panel manufacturers are accelerating steps to expand their presence in cutting-edge organic light-emitting diode (OLED) display sector, which boasts enormous application potential in a wide range of fields such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, vehicle-mounted displays and wearable gadgets.

Compared with traditional liquid crystal displays (LED), OLED is a relatively new technology, part of the latest innovation in displays. It boasts significant improvements in image contrast, brightness, and color spectrum, thus further accelerating advances in the display industry.

Data from market consultancy Sigmaintell Consulting showed that the penetration rate of OLED panels in smartphones across the globe will reach nearly 60 percent in 2025, as major handset manufacturers have adopted OLED panels in their devices.

It said the penetration rate of OLED panels used in tablets is expected to increase from 5.7 percent in 2024 to 18 percent in 2028, while shipments of OLEDs in lap-

tops would surge nearly 92 percent year-on-year in 2024.

Chen Yanshun, chairman of BOE Technology Group Co Ltd, a leading Chinese panel maker, said there is surging demand for OLED panels, which are mainly used in mid-range to high-end smartphones, and the company also plans to expand the application of OLED in tablets, laptops and wearable devices segments.

BOE now owns three flexible active-matrix organic light-emitting diode (AMOLED) production lines in Chengdu and Mianyang in Sichuan province, as well as in Chongqing.

It has announced plans to set up a new AMOLED production line in Chengdu. The products will be mainly high-end touch screens such as those used on mid-sized laptops and tablets. The project is expected to start mass production by the end of 2026.

Industry experts said consumers have a rising demand for laptops and tablets that are thinner and more portable, which drives the rapid development of flexible and foldable display panels.

According to Chen, the company will ramp up efforts to bolster the

application of flexible display screens in diversified scenarios, improve technological innovation capacities and strengthen cooperation with partners of industrial chains.

BOE is transitioning from a display supplier to an innovation-oriented internet of things firm, and will propel the integration of artificial intelligence technology with the manufacturing sector to empower semiconductor displays, Chen added.

Data from market research firm Omdia showed that BOE secured the top position nationwide in the shipments of flexible OLED panels in the first half of 2024, and ranked second across the globe.

Li Yaquin, general manager at Sigmaintell, said demand for flexible OLED panels used in foldable smartphones will continue to rise on the back of 5G commercial applications. Panel makers should further improve their yield rate capacities and reduce production costs.

According to CINNO Research, a Chinese flat panel display consultancy, Chinese display manufacturers accounted for 50.7 percent share in the global smartphone OLED display market in the first half of 2024, surpassing South Korea for the first time.

Xu Fengying, executive vice-president and chief operating officer of

Visionox Technology Inc, another Chinese display panel supplier, said the shipment of foldable phones equipped with flexible OLED display screens is expected to surpass more than 100 million units by 2028, with a compound annual growth rate reaching 34 percent.

The accumulative shipments of its OLED panels reached 240 million units, while the shipments of its AMOLED panels used in wearable devices took the top spot worldwide in the first half of 2024, according to the company.

Visionox will promote technological innovations for OLED panels, which enjoy broader application potential in vehicle-mounted devices, augmented reality, virtual reality and smart televisions, Xu said.

TCL China Star Optoelectronics Technology Co Ltd is upbeat about the prospects of OLED panels, and will strengthen cooperation with global partners to bolster industrial upgrade.

Zhao Jun, senior vice-president of TCL Technology Group and CEO of TCL CSOT, said the inkjet printing OLED panels, which feature greater brightness, faster response times, wider viewing angles and lower power consumption, have been deemed as the development direction for next-generation display technology.

Breakthrough 'green' energy storage debuts

By HAN JINGYAN
hanjingyan@chinadaily.com.cn

As an emerging energy storage solution, the country's new type of water-based battery technology was first applied on March 26 in the eastern province of Jiangsu to boost fast green power charging and discharging.

By partnering with two other forms of energy storage devices (lithium batteries and sodium batteries), the new water-based metal batteries have been installed in a microgrid inside the Wujin National Hi-tech Industrial Zone in Wujin district under the prefecture-level city of Changzhou.

The zone has set up an innovation industrial park to bolster innovation, while the microgrid was jointly launched by Changzhou Binhu Construction and Development Group Co Ltd and State Grid Changzhou Power Supply Co, becoming the largest industrial-park microgrid in Jiangsu to boost large-scale application of new energy in industrial parks.

"With a supply area of 370,000 square meters, the microgrid has 1.61 megawatts of distributed photovoltaics as well as 6,035 kilowatts/10,660 kilowatt-hours of energy storage, providing stable and reliable green power for high-rises, factories and electric vehicles," said Chen Liang, general manager of State Grid Wujin.

A microgrid refers to a small power system composed of distributed power sources (such as photovoltaic and wind power), energy storage devices, local power loads, and energy management systems. It can join a large power grid or operate independently as an island mode.

It has been learned that lithium batteries have high energy density and can store more electricity in the same volume, while sodium batteries can support fast charging and discharging. "But water-based metal battery has

outstanding environmental and safety advantages," he said.

Sun Jinpeng, a technical expert at Yixin Energy Technology (Jiangsu) Co Ltd, which is dedicated to water-based metal battery technology development, said the park is being furnished with a new 150 kWh water-based metal battery.

"This is the first time that this technology has been applied in China, showcasing a comprehensive use of various energy storage technologies, and truly achieving 'sufficient power and fast charging and discharging,'" he said.

In terms of energy collaboration, Chen said the project has created a control platform to serve as a "smart brain" of the park, realizing better regulation of such resources as photovoltaics, energy storage, charging facilities and air conditioning.

As the number of NEVs in the park has exceeded 200, there is a good potential for vehicle-network interaction, Chen added, noting that four interaction points have been built, with 16 7-kW V2G (vehicle to grid) charging stations and two 60-kW special vehicle V2G charging stations.

As intelligent technology has been applied, a car owner can participate in the interaction by completing an authorization on the park's control platform, and plug in the V2G charging station after each parking, Chen said.

"When the power grid needs it, the system can automatically start reverse discharge, and car owners can receive corresponding discharge benefits in real time," he said.

In terms of direct current demonstration, an integrated DC microgrid system incorporating photovoltaic, storage and charging has been built on the southeastern side of the park, integrating a 64.4 kW distributed photovoltaic carport, 2,580 kWh energy storage equipment, and 13 DC charging piles with a total maximum output power of 2,200 kW, he said.



Jiangsu province's largest industrial-park microgrid to boost large-scale application of new energy is put into service on March 26 in Changzhou, saving 4.6 million yuan (\$628,724) in energy costs each year and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 7,585 metric tons. XU DUO / FOR CHINA DAILY



PUBLIC INTEREST AD: 0135

BUSINESSINSIGHT

EAGLE EYE

By Dong Yan

Chinese firms unfazed by tariff challenge

On April 8, the United States government announced a steep increase in “reciprocal tariffs” on imports from China — raising them to 84 percent — and followed the move with additional measures, pushing tariffs on Chinese goods as high as 245 percent. These aggressive and unilateral moves mark a turning point in globalization, adding uncertainty to the global economy, raising costs for market entry and fueling trade tensions.

Initially, the tariff hikes indeed posed serious challenges for some Chinese exporters, causing declining orders and shrinking profit margins. However, Chinese enterprises responded swiftly.

By boosting investment in research and development and upgrading their product lines, numerous firms have begun to successfully move up the value chain, making their exports less price-sensitive. Meanwhile, companies have expanded into emerging markets, especially those participated in the Belt and Road Initiative, thereby reducing dependence on the US market.

Ironically, while US tariffs seek to exert pressure on China, they have backfired domestically. US consumers now face rising prices, companies grapple with higher import costs and disrupted supply chains, and the overall economy is suffering. The intended effects of the tariff war have not materialized. Instead, the marginal utility of such tariffs continues to decline. Even if Washington insists on escalating the tariff game, such actions are increasingly symbolic and largely ineffective.

In response to ongoing tariff shocks, Chinese enterprises need to move beyond short-term mitigation and embrace long-term strategic transformation through measures such as cost control and compliance, innovation-driven growth, market diversification and supply chain restructuring. These strategies allow firms not only to withstand external pressure, but also to turn challenges into opportunities for structural upgrading.

One core strategy has been refining internal operations to manage cost and compliance pressures. Through digital transformation and cost management, companies can trim non-essential expenditures, optimize logistics and inventory, and enhance adaptive capabilities.

For example, Japanese automakers in the 1980s, facing heavy tariffs in the US, adopted lean production methods to reduce waste and drive efficiency. Likewise, since 2018, Chinese security technology firms have responded to tariff pressures by streamlining organizational structures, improving supply chain efficiency, reducing inventories and accelerating capital turnover — thus maintaining market competitiveness.

Notably, despite broad-based US



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

tariffs affecting multiple countries, Chinese firms have retained a relative competitive edge in the US market.

Second, the key focus is innovation. Sustained innovation remains central to Chinese companies' ability to command premium pricing in international markets. Numerous studies indicate that China's exporters have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of tariffs. Drawing lessons from Japanese giants like Sony and Panasonic in the 1980s — who thrived amid protectionist environments by prioritizing R&D — Chinese firms are now accelerating their push toward smart, green technologies. By aligning with global trends of digital and intelligent industrial transformation, firms can enhance product value and reduce reliance on low-cost exports. “Quality over quantity” is becoming the new paradigm for mitigating tariff shocks.

Additionally, diversification of export markets is also critical. Reducing overreliance on any single market — particularly the US — is crucial. By entering new and emerging markets, Chinese companies can unlock fresh growth opportunities. Small and medium-sized enterprises and light manufacturers are finding footholds in ASEAN, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. Leveraging consumer data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning, firms can adapt products to local preferences and fine-tune marketing strategies. Diversified product designs, intelligent forecasting and cloud-based solutions help improve supply-demand matching and reduce market information asymmetry, powering China's digital-first approach to international expansion.

Moreover, supply chains are undergoing strategic restructuring. To counteract trade barriers, many companies are reconfiguring their global supply chains through regional substitution strategies. This is not a new approach. In the 1930s, companies like General Electric and Coca-Cola responded to global tariff wars by localizing production and setting up overseas operations. Japanese carmakers in the 1980s shifted significant production to North America to mitigate US trade restrictions. Today, Chinese companies are leveraging the country's massive manufacturing base and integrated industrial ecosystem to isolate risks and manage costs through strategic overseas investment and supply chain localization.

In sum, heightened tariffs and economic uncertainty demand a forward-looking, resilient approach. Chinese enterprises must remain committed to openness and innovation, seizing this moment not merely as a challenge but as an inflection point. By shifting from passive defense to proactive global strategy, China's corporate sector can emerge stronger and more globally integrated.

The writer is director of the International Trade Division, Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Beyond tariff uncertainty: Anchoring long-term value in China's asset

MAIN STREET

By Angela Cheng

The recently announced reciprocal tariffs by the United States, which exceeded market expectations in both scale and scope, have caused significant volatility in global financial markets. While these measures may temporarily dampen bilateral trade flows, disrupt global supply chains and pressure Chinese exports over the near term, China's strategic economic resilience and policy flexibility position it to convert external challenges into opportunities for structural upgrading.

The nation's technological leadership and growing emphasis on shareholder returns continue to enhance the appeal of Chinese assets. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's unique advantages — bolstered by central government policy support, strong public tech firms, and

attention to shareholder returns — will reinforce its status as the premier gateway for global investors seeking long-term participation in China's growth story amid tariff uncertainties.

Economic recalibration

China's economic resilience forms a solid foundation for its assets, supported by the world's most complete industrial system and largest domestic consumer market. Having been the world's top manufacturer for 14 consecutive years, producing nearly 30 percent of global goods, China's integrated supply chains and global operational capabilities enable its industries to absorb short-term shocks while enhancing long-term competitiveness. Simultaneously, its vast middle-income group population, with stable and rising incomes, drives consumption-led growth, reducing reliance on external demand and anchoring stability in global economic recalibration.

China has also taken the initiative in the new wave of technological advances. Since 2018, to counter the full-scale trade war

and targeted suppression of Chinese tech firms, the country has intensified efforts in innovation and self-reliance, achieving critical breakthroughs in multiple critical technologies. In artificial intelligence, the rise of DeepSeek has challenged the long-standing US dominance. China's focus on manufacturing gives itself advantages in multiple AI application fields, including robotics, autonomous vehicles and drones. The nation is excelling in the training and inference processes of large AI models, creating a “learning-by-doing” paradigm. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, between 2014 and 2023, China filed over 38,000 generative AI patent applications, surpassing the US total of 6,276 applications over the same period.

China maintains substantial policy tools to navigate challenges. Policymakers have reserved contingency tools to mitigate potential external shocks. Beyond retaliatory actions, domestic demand stimulus measures will be the primary counter to US tariffs. A potential stimulus package of 2

trillion yuan (\$273.4 billion) may prioritize domestic demand to offset export-related pressures. Other pending policies — such as childcare subsidies and accelerated urban village redevelopment support measures — are likely to accelerate economic growth. On the monetary policy front, the central bank may introduce sector-specific instruments to further stabilize foreign trade.

Chinese capital markets remain attractive for long-term investors, with compelling medium-to-long-term catalysts. The launch of China's “market stabilization fund”, while stabilizing the market, is also sending strong signals of the long-term value of Chinese capital markets.

Hong Kong's pivotal role

To better capture the long-term value of Chinese assets, Hong Kong's capital market holds unique strategic advantages. The city has regained its position as Asia's top financial hub and third globally in the latest Global Financial Centers Index. Chinese mainland's robust economic growth continues to lead major global

economies, attracting international investors to tap into its opportunities through Hong Kong's markets. At the same time, Beijing's drive to foster “new quality productive forces” has accelerated tech innovation, resulting in a steady stream of high-growth tech firms listing in Hong Kong. To further strengthen the city's financial role, the central government has introduced multiple supportive policies. Recent high-level meetings have reaffirmed commitments to elevating Hong Kong's status as an international financial hub. Key measures include expanding cross-border investment channels under the “New Nine Guidelines” and launching initiatives such as the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect 2.0. Closer regulatory coordination between mainland and Hong Kong authorities has also revitalized market activity, particularly in sectors such as consumer goods, advanced tech and clean energy.

In addition to policy support, Hong Kong's capital market is also a strong catalyst. On one front, the city's bourse features some of the

most innovative tech companies in China such as Alibaba, Tencent and Xiaomi. Before US tariff-induced volatility, the Hang Seng Tech Index had surged over 30 percent year-to-date, outperforming other global asset classes and entering technical bull market territory. Also, over the past three years, Hong Kong-listed firms have delivered annualized total shareholder returns of 4-5 percent through share buybacks and dividends, surpassing the US average of 3 percent and ranking top in the Asia-Pacific region. The combination of high growth potential and disciplined shareholder return measures is likely to attract more long-term capital into Hong Kong's capital market. Therefore the city is poised to become a key hub for global investors seeking to capitalize on China's technological progress and long-term shareholder value growth.

The writer is chief macro strategist at CGS International, leader of global research at CGS New Development Institute. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

Testing times for US as ill-judged tariff attack is only piling further misery on its woes

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang's recent visit to China underscored the critical importance of the Chinese market for the United States' tech giant, with Huang emphasizing the company's commitment to continued collaboration with China despite the mounting challenges imposed by successive US administrations.

Just days before Huang's visit, the US Department of Commerce imposed licensing requirements on Nvidia's H20 chip, along with AMD's MI308 chip and similar artificial intelligence technologies destined for China. A move that signals a broader crackdown on semiconductor exports to China, casting an even darker shadow over the future of tech trade relations between the two nations.

US President Donald Trump's casual dismissal of concerns surrounding Nvidia's operations in China, contrasts sharply with his administration's proposed "new basket" of semiconductor tariffs, coupled with its tighter export restrictions, which signal it is ramping up the stringent tech policies initiated by its predecessor.

But the proposed tariffs on the powerful computer chips inside smartphones and other technologies will only add to the supply chain disruptions that the administration's extortionist tariffs have already created in critical sectors.

Facing enormous domestic pressure, the US administration is trying to create the impression that it has the upper hand in the trade confrontation it has initiated with China. Trump said on Thursday that he expects to "make a good deal" with China. But despite that professed optimism, the lack of proactive engagement from the Chinese side underscores that his administration has overestimated the leverage the US has. China remains open to talks, but only if they are based on mutual respect and conducted on equal footing. Coercion and extortion will not produce a deal.

It is only when a country has suffered enough harm that it is likely to consider softening its position and start talking about a deal. And as Julian Evans-Pritchard, chief China economist at Capital Economics, said: "Judging by the market reaction alone, I think it's the United States (that is feeling more pain) right now."

Since the US administration announced its steep extra tariffs on imports from China and other trade partners, drastic stock market fluctuations have shown how much it has damaged investor confidence. And the soaring Treasury yields, which were close to 4.5 percent on April 11, reportedly panicked the US government, as high Treasury yields are set to increase the financial costs of its repayment of the country's colossal national debt, which had risen to \$36.22 trillion on April 3, about 122 percent of the US' total GDP last year. What is more, interest payments constitute the fastest-growing part of the US government budget and are estimated to be as much as \$13 trillion over the next decade alone, according to estimates by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a non-partisan, nonprofit organization in the US.

If the US administration sticks to its belligerent stance, it will further batter the US economy by creating a vicious cycle in which rising costs and declining productivity dampen US growth.

The US government should reflect on the true causes of its economic woes rather than trying to mug other countries for money. For decades, its corporate sector has taken advantage of economic globalization to shift their factories overseas to make gargantuan amounts of money in almost every corner of the world. But that money went to the pockets of the rich in the US and not to the government. That means investment has not been made in crucial areas to support the long-term and sustainable development of the country, such as infrastructure, public health, education and poverty alleviation.

Worse, it is estimated that the US has spent \$8 trillion on waging wars and instigating conflicts, revolts and regime changes in many other countries post-Sept 11, 2001. It also spends over \$150 billion a year on maintaining its approximately 800 military bases overseas.

The US administration has depicted "beautiful" economic prospects in the future to sell its tariff regime to the public, but they are nothing but a mirage. On Friday, it was reported that discussions have begun within the Trump administration on forming a working group to urgently address the issue if it fails to negotiate a breakthrough with the Chinese government.

China's increasingly diversified export markets, large US Treasury debt, stock of key strategic minerals, and institutional strengths not only enable the country to withstand the tariff test, but also underline its strong bargaining position in any negotiations.

One can only reap what one sows. If the US really wants to solve the problem through dialogue and negotiation, it should cease its "maximum pressure" approach, stop threatening blackmail, and talk to China on the basis of equality, respect and mutual benefit.

Peace process must benefit all parties not just one

On Friday, after wrapping up meetings with European leaders in Paris, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the Donald Trump administration was willing to move on if the negotiations it had initiated with the belligerents in the Ukraine conflict didn't yield results soon.

The US president stood behind Rubio's remark saying that if, "for some reason", one of them makes it very difficult, the US will just "take a pass".

Given the administration's characteristic inconsistency and flip-flopping on some major issues, such as the tariff war it has launched, it seems that announcing a U-turn on Ukraine may be part of its approach to force a deal.

It is unfathomable that the Trump administration should step back now having made such a big song and dance about its ability to broker a peace deal. Walking away from a task that was never going to be as easy as one, two, three, as it implied, would only further damage the global leadership credibility of the United States. After all, the memory is still fresh of the US leader's promise to have the Russia-Ukraine conflict resolved within 24 hours of taking office after he won the US presidential election in November.

No one doubts the difficulty of advancing such an arduous endeavour. Despite all the fanfare, the US-initiated negotiations to end the conflict have encountered more setbacks than they have made progress mainly because of the huge gap between stances of Russia and Ukraine. But having raised hopes that there might be an end to the fighting the administration has to push on.

After the Trump administration took office with its claim there should be a peace deal and it was the one that could bring it about, a lot of things surrounding the Ukraine crisis have changed: The US and its European allies no longer appear to be of one mind on supporting Ukraine. And the US has made it clear its support comes at the cost of Ukraine's minerals and rare earth resources.

This change of approach was very publicly made clear in the televised humiliation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in his meeting with Trump and US Vice-President JD Vance at the White House in February.

It is highly unlikely that an ambitious president such as Trump and his equally ambitious team, having vowed to broker a deal, really intend to walk away.

But that does not change the question of whether its real intention in trying to broker peace in Ukraine is about stopping fighting and saving lives or if it is to ensure the US profits from any deal?

Considering that Ukraine and the US have signed a "memorandum of intent" on a minerals deal on Thursday, with Trump telling reporters in the White House the same day that he believed a deal could be signed next week, it would be difficult to convince many in the world to believe the US did not harbor a selfish agenda now that it appears willing to walk away having already got what it wanted from the process. Otherwise, the US will only prove itself as a plunderer taking advantage of the Ukraine crisis rather than a genuine peacemaker.

The crux to resolving the Ukraine crisis is to face squarely its complicated historical causes, respect the justified concerns of relevant parties, and balance their rational interests in the pursuit of a common purpose of building a lasting, workable and balanced security mechanism for Europe.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said, "All parties should learn something from the crisis": that security should be mutual and equal, and no country should build its security on the insecurity of another.

As he rightly pointed out, the negotiation table is where the conflict ends and peace starts; and everyone gains from peace.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

White House should not expect the EU to roll over

While the warm welcome Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni received at the White House on Thursday is a sign of the European Union and the United States hopefully easing tensions after their month-long trade standoff, it would be a step too far to interpret the two sides' remarks or the agreements reached as Europe surrendering its interests to the US coercion.

Reports covering Meloni's meeting with the US leader indicate that although the Italian leader used the occasion to cast herself as the only European leader capable of de-escalating the US' confrontational stance toward Brussels, it was her US host opining that the EU needs to "get smart" on defense and migration and threatening to force a trade agreement if none is forthcoming.

It is widely considered that Meloni and US President Donald Trump are broadly aligned on the political spectrum and appear to have a cordial relationship, with both stressing national sovereignty, traditional values and anti-immigration policies. It's also a fact that Trump praised Meloni as "a great Prime Minister" and said she is "doing a fantastic job in Italy", but such remarks do not point to the EU sacrificing European

interests under the coercion of the US.

In some sense, it is the US administration's temporary suspension of steep tariffs on EU exports for 90 days that has laid the basis for Meloni, or any other European leader, to visit the US, not vice versa. The widest consensus of European people and European political forces must be to serve European interests and defend European values, and a friendly, polite gesture doesn't mean compromising on that.

Trump has reportedly accepted an invitation to visit Italy, which, if realized, would be his first visit to Europe since taking office for a second time on Jan 20. In Europe he can expect a warm welcome, and possibly the deal that he expects to be "100 percent" reached, too, but he should not expect any deal to be made that serves US interests at the cost of European interests.

On Friday, the day after Meloni met Trump, Italian politician Brando Benifei, who as chair of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with the US, recently led a group to the US to meet members of the US Congress and others trying to ease the trade crisis, told the media that he is convinced that a deal will be

reached because "the damage for both sides would be too high".

Benifei said: "Do not forget that the EU has a so-called Anti-Coercion Instrument that could be used to limit the economic presence of the US (in Europe) and badly damage many important US companies. They are scared that if there is no deal, the situation will be very damaging for them. I'm sure that pressure will make everyone more reasonable."

The EU is well-positioned to utter that "don't forget" to the US. The annual bilateral trade in goods between the EU and the US has exceeded \$975 billion, and US imports from the EU — particularly in autos, pharmaceuticals, and machinery — play a big role in US supply chains. Crucially, the EU maintains strong trade ties with China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United Kingdom, and Japan, all of which share concerns over the protectionism of the US and would likely align with the EU in resisting it. This broad support network, paired with the EU's unified market strength, gives the bloc the leverage to push back in any tariff conflict.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Carney building a castle in the air

After Mark Carney's victory in the leadership race for Canada's ruling Liberal Party in March, Beijing has clearly expressed its hope that the incoming government in Canada will adopt a positive and pragmatic approach toward China.

"We hope that the Canadian side will form an objective and rational perception of China ... and work with China in the same direction for the improvement and growth of bilateral relations," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, noting that China always believes that the two sides need to grow bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

In his meeting with his Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly in Lima, Peru's capital, in November, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi conveyed Beijing's openness to work with Ottawa to properly handle differences and keep bilateral ties developing on the right track, which, as the two sides agreed, serves the common interests of the two countries.

It is apparent that China's stance on its relations with Canada is consistent. It firmly believes that although China and Canada have different political systems, which is a choice made by their respective people and rooted in each other's history and culture, China's fast development along its own path should not be a reason for Canada to deem China as a "threat". Something, however, the Carney government seems intent on doing.

The Canadian prime minister alleged that China is one of the largest "threats" with respect to foreign interference in Canada and is an emerging "threat" in the Arctic in a debate on Thursday night ahead of the April 28 election, which is to elect members of the House of Commons to the 45th Canadian Parliament, a competition between the Liberal Party and Conservative Party of Canada led by Pierre Poilievre.

When asked to elaborate at a news conference in Niagara Falls on Friday, Carney went further in saying that Canada has to counter Chinese "foreign interference threats", criticizing China "for being a partner with Russia in the war with Ukraine" and said it is a "threat" to broader Asia and "Taiwan in particular".

Although playing the "China card" is a routine for some Canadian politicians in elections, Carney has gone too far this time in crossing Beijing's red line on the Taiwan question, which is China's internal affair that brooks no external interference, particularly when Canada needs China as a key trading partner to counterbalance the negative impacts of the United States' tariff war that Carney vowed to fight back against.

His remarks also contradict with those of the top diplomat of his government, Joly, who told Wang in Lima that Canada adheres to the one-China policy and is committed to promoting the development of Canada-China relations.

The previous Justin Trudeau government actually started mending its ties with China even before the Democrats lost the 2024 US presidential election, as it was well aware if the Republicans won the election, Canada would have to change its China policy as the following US administration would not feel grateful for Ottawa continuing to play the role assigned by the Joe Biden administration.

While most US allies and partners, including the European Union, Japan, Australia and the Republic of Korea, have started mending economic and trade ties with China, the Carney government will put itself in a very difficult position between China and the US if it acts on Carney's provocative remarks related to China.

Acknowledging there are opportunities for Canada to engage beyond the US and China, the world's two largest economies, he said: "There are huge opportunities in Europe, in ASEAN, Mercosur, other parts of the world where we can further deepen, and we should, and I think we will."

But if Carney thinks his government can lead Canada to rebuild its international industry and supply chains excluding China, he is deluding himself. Although he needs to appear tough as a leader given Trudeau's image of weakness, to turn a partner into an enemy is not being tough, it's being shortsighted.

—LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 HuiXin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Fling Wat Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailypacific.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailysusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27261-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China-Southeast Asia Relations

Editor's note: As a significant partner of Southeast Asian countries, China is willing to strengthen cooperation with its neighbors to jointly push the modernization process of Asia and share opportunities. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Amitendu Palit

US tariffs can boost China-ASEAN trade

President Xi Jinping's visit to Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia comes at a time when China and most of the Southeast Asian region are working on strategies to offset the impacts of a new round of high tariffs by the United States on their imports.

Apart from China, which has traditionally been the largest source of imports for the US, most Southeast Asian countries are major exporters to the US. With the US administration deciding to "correct the goods trade imbalances" that the US has with its trade partners, the economies that have large trade surpluses with the US have been hit with the highest tariffs.

Currently, the US has announced accumulated tariffs of 245 percent on Chinese imports. Also, after the US announced the imposition of reciprocal tariffs on April 2, the tariffs on exports from several US trade partners have increased significantly. Among Southeast Asian countries, Cambodia has attracted the highest tariff hike — 49 percent — followed by Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar, with tariffs of 48 percent, 46 percent and 44 percent respectively. Malaysian goods, meanwhile, face 24 percent tariffs.

Although the US administration has delayed most of the tariffs by 90 days, a baseline tariff of 10 percent has been levied since the announcement of the reciprocal tariffs on practically all US trade partners, including the countries mentioned above. Further higher tariffs on specific countries will come into effect after 90 days.

In the intervening period, countries are expected to individually negotiate with the US on a variety of mutual tariff and non-tariff market access barriers. The success of these negotiations will determine the eventual country-specific tariffs.

Since the beginning of the United States' trade war against China in 2018, Southeast Asia has attracted considerable attention, because of the shifting of a number of investment projects and parts of industry and supply chains from the Chinese mainland to various Southeast Asian countries.



The author is a senior research fellow and research lead (trade and economics) at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.

The relocation was due to the producers wanting to export goods to the US from locations that didn't attract the kind of tariffs that products from China did.

Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia,

Thailand and Indonesia are important countries in this regard. Exports from these countries have been getting into the US at low MFN (most-favored-nation) tariffs that are about 2.5 percent on most items. In addition, some of these countries have also been enjoying preferential market access through the US Generalized System of Preferences.

However, the new set of tariffs will significantly impact the access exports from these countries will get to the US market. Therefore, these countries need to identify new markets and diversify their exports.

Reciprocal tariffs introduced by the

US are likely to have the wider impact of encouraging more trade diversion from the US market. This is expected to develop into a US plus one strategy. In this respect, the main exporters from Southeast Asia to the US, such as Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia, will look to export more to China.

As the world's second-largest economy, China is the most important regional market that Southeast Asian economies will look forward to diversifying their exports. This intention also complements China's efforts to boost domestic consumption, particularly those of imports.

Increasing imports from Southeast Asia, particularly through existing trade agreements, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, should be economically beneficial for China.

Having access to more inexpensive imports from the region that will meet both its consumption and intermediate input requirements can help China shift more of its domestic production to high-tech areas. More imports from the region will also help support the large online retail market in the country that can source more goods from the region and offer a wider variety to domestic customers.

These prospects will also encourage Chinese businesses to expand their capacities in Southeast Asia with an eye to making products for the mainland market.

The current volatility in world trade caused by the US tariffs will lead to the realignment of global production networks, the functioning of supply chains and cross-border patterns of regional trade. It is quite likely that one of the most prominent shifts could be increased trade between China and Southeast Asia with several Southeast Asian countries becoming major exporters to China, and Chinese investment further increasing in the region. President Xi's visit to Southeast Asia and his meetings with regional leaders could mark the beginning of this new transition.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Aksornsri Phanisharn

Visit to boost neighbors' ties amid tariff war

Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia from Monday to Friday is expected to deepen relations between China and not only the three Southeast Asian countries but also the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as a whole.

President Xi's visit to the three countries comes at a time when the US administration has launched a tariff war against China, and Washington's other trading partners. The US has adopted a highly protectionist trade policy, triggering trade conflicts and causing uncertainties for the global economy. Indeed, the rise of protectionism has fractured supply chains and diminished trust among nations.

Under such circumstances, ASEAN has become even more crucial for China's strategy — as a trade partner, investment destination and neighbourhood economy. As such, his visit is not only timely but could also create more opportunities to deepen China-ASEAN cooperation.

To defuse the economic tensions triggered by the extraordinarily high US tariffs, a major economy like China should take measures to help expedite regional economic recovery and maintain regional stability. By doing so, China can turn the crisis into an opportunity, positioning itself as a reliable partner of ASEAN. And by combining concrete economic support with trust-building diplomacy, China and ASEAN can forge a united front against US protectionism while building a multipolar global economy.

To strengthen regional trade resilience, China and ASEAN should expeditiously implement the existing free trade agreements — the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — eliminate tariffs on ASEAN's export-oriented goods such as electronics, textiles and farm products which have been hit hard by the US tariffs, simplify the rules of origin and smooth customs procedure for ASEAN goods at Chinese ports.

China should also accord priority to ASEAN farm and aqua products, and consumer goods, and make the process of entering the Chinese market easier for some ASEAN exports. Equally important, since both China and ASEAN uphold the multilateral trading system, they could consider filing a joint case with the World Trade Organization against the US' tariffs.

As for the market diversification strategy, China and ASEAN should jointly promote ASEAN and Chinese export-oriented goods such as halal food, and renewable and green products through, for example, trade fairs in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, and leverage the Belt and Road Initiative to access new markets in the Global South.

Additionally, China should create more economic opportunities for ASEAN member states to redirect their exports to China and third-party countries via Chinese e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba and Pinduoduo.

To diversify the global supply chains, China should explore the possibility of relocating the manufacturing units of tariff-targeted goods to ASEAN member states not only to avoid US tariffs but also to create more jobs for the local people and share advanced technologies for high-value industries, such as electric vehicle battery plants in Indonesia and semiconductor test labs in Thailand.

Also, Chinese investors should collaborate with local entrepreneurs, including small and medium-sized enterprises, in ASEAN to jointly develop innovative products and share their intellectual property rights, and Chinese companies should "teach" local SMEs how to use Chinese e-commerce platforms in order to help them expand the reach of their products to broader global markets.

In particular, Chinese enterprises should demonstrate that their ventures in ASEAN member states are mutually beneficial by ensuring, say, 70 percent of their workers are local people, while the Chinese government could consider providing some financial assistance, such as funding grants, for ASEAN start-ups in green technology and the digital economy.

To help some financially weak ASEAN members cope with the global shocks, China and ASEAN should explore the possibility of setting up regional financial funds, including an emergency economic stabilization fund, to stabilize currencies and to help countries emerge out of balance-of-payment crises.

And to build financial safety nets, China and ASEAN should expand their local currency settlement mechanism by broadening the scope of the Chinese yuan-Singapore dollar, yuan-Thai baht or yuan-Indonesian rupiah currency swap agreements.

In sum, President Xi's visit to the three countries is likely to boost regional trade and investment, and pave the way for China to lead the region's economic recovery and maintain economic stability amid the intensifying US tariff war. The visit will also help China take actions to demonstrate that ASEAN is a reliable and mutually beneficial trading partner.

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



The author is an associate professor in the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, Thailand.

Edwin Oh Chun Kit

Stability and growth shared regional responsibility

Globalization enabled most nations to benefit from extensive trade networks and mutual reliance. However in recent years, a quiet resurgence of protectionism has sought to reshape global trade, with some countries, notably the United States, increasingly adopting restrictive measures. The Global Trade Alert database suggests a surge in discriminatory policies, with the United States leading the charge through policy interventions often claimed to be "shielding domestic markets" but perceived as "discriminatory" from a global free trade perspective.

Perhaps the most striking development in this context came in early April, when the US administration announced its so-called reciprocal tariffs. These were framed as defending domestic US industry and improving trade deficits, but in reality they have unleashed widespread disruption across global markets that would adversely impact both the US and its trading partners.

Economies in the Southeast Asian region were among those hardest hit with the punitive tariffs, exacerbated by the nature of their export-driven markets with some industries still highly dependent on the US market. While the 90-day pause on most levies (except for China) offers temporary breathing room — the uncertainty risks unraveling decades of free trade norms.

Amid these developments, Southeast Asian nations face a pressing need to explore alternative trade strategies to cushion or hedge potential adversities stemming from such uncertainty and trade shocks. In this context, diversification, both by exploring new partnerships and strengthening existing ones, has emerged not only as a shield but as a powerful strategy to



The author is an analyst and head of External Relations at Center of Advanced Studies and Research (CASR) Malaysia.

unlock new opportunities while building resilience.

For the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, alternative global powers such as Russia, emerging groupings such as BRICS or even Central Asia (which remains relatively untapped) hold promise, but China emerges as a natural partner for ASEAN due to its geographic proximity and deep existing economic ties.

Frameworks such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and China's Belt and Road Initiative have increasingly woven their economies into a mutually beneficial trade network. In fact, China and ASEAN have been each other's largest trading partner for five consecutive years with bilateral trade in goods reaching \$982.34 billion in 2024, marking a year-on-year growth of 7.8 percent.

Given that cooperation between ASEAN and China is already built on relatively strong foundations, what's next? On the economic front, one compelling avenue to explore is deeper cooperation in their digital economies. ASEAN has the world's fastest-growing internet market and it is poised to double its digital economy to nearly \$2 trillion by 2030 through the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement, targeted for finalization late this year.

Leading ASEAN's 2025 chairmanship, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has consistently stressed the

need for greater digital collaboration. China's strengths in technological advances such as artificial intelligence, e-commerce platform solutions and robust manufacturing expertise would prove useful to both Malaysia and ASEAN in building the necessary soft and hard infrastructure for their digital economy.

With this in view, a strategic alignment between the pillars of complementary needs under China's Digital Silk Road strategies and DEFA could amplify such efforts, particularly in fostering an environment conducive to the development of cross-border e-commerce, advanced infrastructure investments, and seamless digital transactions, extending cooperation beyond the traditional goods trade.

In such turbulent times, achieving economic resilience remains imperative. However, the role of soft power diplomacy and the cultivation of mutual understanding is equally critical in bridging global divides. ASEAN and China have the opportunity to serve as champions of global dialogue by establishing platforms for inclusive engagement of larger magnitudes.

Why ASEAN-China? China has demonstrated a relatively mature approach to managing complex issues through measured responses and restraint, often without triggering unnecessary escalations. Together with ASEAN's rich cultural tapestry and its longstanding commitment to centrality and consensus-building, this crossover provides a robust foundation to reinvigorate the "waning spirit of multilateralism".

Nevertheless, challenges still remain. Economically, there are genuine concerns among ASEAN member states, particularly among companies in the manufacturing sector that a greater influx of lower-cost Chinese goods could seek alternatives to the heavily tariffed US.

There could be potentially adverse effects for domestic markets while this may benefit consumers with wider variety, especially in the context of heightened trade tensions linked to recent tariff escalations.

Setting aside its relationship with China, ASEAN itself has pressing internal work that must not be overlooked. While ASEAN's commitment to neutrality, consensus-building, and centrality has been widely praised (and very rightly so), recent shocks raise a fundamental question — Does the bloc actually possess the operational synergy required to act cohesively in the face of major global disruptions such as the tariff war?

Perhaps, this moment should serve as a catalyst for greater ASEAN synergy, compelling the bloc to harness its collective strength with greater decisiveness. But achieving this is no simple task. Conflicting national interests at times, varied levels of economic development and procedural "inertia" to some extent will challenge efforts for greater integration. This is an opportunity for leadership. As ASEAN's 2025 Chair, Malaysia is well-positioned to take the lead in striving to bridge divides, align strategic priorities and drive the bloc towards greater integration, both horizontally and vertically.

Despite ASEAN-China's strong potential for greater cooperation along with the emergence of Trump administration's tariff war, ASEAN's traditional partnerships with Western nations, such as the United States, Australia or even the European Union have long been and will continue to be, strong cornerstones of ASEAN's diplomatic and economic landscape. There is no need for it to choose sides.

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

GLOBAL VIEWS

ZHU FENG

Better management of tensions advocated

China needs to step up its efforts in response to the Trump administration's scaling up of US interference in the South China Sea

Three months into Donald Trump's second term, his administration's aggressive pursuit of "America First" policies marked by protectionism, nationalism and unilateralism — has sent shock waves across the world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the South China Sea, where the already volatile situation faces new uncertainties.



As great power competition over maritime strategy becomes a defining feature of China-US relations, Trump's return to office is unlikely to scale back US diplomatic and military engagement in the region. Instead, his administration is expected to double down on efforts to suppress and contain China's sovereignty over islands and reefs, as well as its maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea.

Washington's growing involvement in the region risks accelerating the emergence of a "new Cold War" dynamic, making its South China Sea strategy one of the key pillars of its broader "Indo-Pacific" approach.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has just completed his first trip to Asia as part of his defense diplomacy push, with Japan and the Philippines as his first two stops. In Tokyo, he underscored the need for the US-Japan military alliance to serve as a strong deterrent against China, while calling for an expanded defense mandate to justify deeper intervention in the Taiwan question, the South China Sea and the East China Sea. In Manila, he vowed continued US support for the Philippines to counter China's "coercive behavior" in the South China Sea. The rhetoric and agenda make clear that the Trump administration is not scaling back its interference in the South China Sea, whether in diplomatic, military or political terms.

Rather, it is doubling down —

relying heavily on "minilateral" mechanisms and alliance networks — to entrench US primacy in the "Indo-Pacific", while discrediting China's legitimate claims to Taiwan island and its maritime rights, and casting China's lawful actions to safeguard stability in the region as acts of aggression. For Washington, the ultimate goal is to clear the path for the full implementation of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

While Trump's inaugural address in late January offered little detail on his China policy, his administration, positioning China as its primary strategic rival, will maintain a fierce strategy of containment, aimed at stalling and slowing China's development. In the South China Sea, this means a continuation — and possible escalation — of measures designed to counter Chinese influence.

The Trump administration is expected to oversee an expansion of the US military footprint in the Asia-Pacific, further strengthening the "extended deterrence" strategy from the early post-Cold War era to address the shifting balance of military power between the US and China. Echoing Cold War-era tactics, the Trump administration is likely to ramp up its deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific. The Philippines, which has already allowed such deployments on its soil, may see further expansion of US military assets.

At the same time, Washington will continue to portray China's maritime strategy as an attempt to establish a "might makes right" order, aiming to provoke an arms race while stoking regional anxieties about Beijing's intentions. The US will double down on its use of information warfare, cognitive influence operations and ideological confrontation, employing a blend of soft and hard power to try and strategically suppress China.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

On the military and security front, the US will maintain its military presence in the South China Sea, intervene in China's economic influence in Southeast Asia, and impose legal constraints and international pressure on China through international law and multilateral platforms.

The US is likely to continue supporting claimants of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations in the South China Sea in their use of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to challenge China's territorial integrity, pushing

for a new "legal battle", "diplomatic war" and "public opinion war". Although many ASEAN members continue to balance their ties between Beijing and Washington, the US remains the primary external backer of countries contesting China's maritime rights. The previous US administration's stance on the issue — exemplified by former secretary of state Antony Blinken's remarks at the annual ASEAN meeting in October 2024, where he denounced China's actions as "unlawful" — will likely persist under Trump's second term.

Washington may also embolden the Philippines to escalate maritime confrontations in waters near Ren'ai Reef, Xianbin Reef and Huangyan Island. Encouraging Manila to conduct "gray zone" operations — covert or ambiguous tactics designed to challenge Chinese positions without triggering outright conflict — could further heighten tensions. These actions aim to coerce more countries to support the distorted narrative of China's "bullying" and "coercive" actions in the South China Sea. This will provide a pretext for the US, Japan, India and some NATO countries to intervene in the disputes.

The Trump administration may also continue to weaponize economic sanctions to intervene in the South China Sea issue. Statistics show that since January 2018, when the Trump administration escalated trade tensions with China, the frequency of US "Freedom of Navigation" operations has been closely linked to the intensity of trade disputes. Specifically, in 2019, US naval "Freedom of Navigation" operations reached a historic high of nine times.

Furthermore, the US has imposed sanctions on Chinese companies and officials involved in developing infrastructure on South China Sea islands.

Despite the Trump administration's continued hardline stance toward China, avoiding direct conflict and confrontation with China remains a priority for the US government. The policy team in the Trump administration is heavily populated with hawkish figures, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, who have repeatedly pushed for industrial policies targeting China and significant sanctions on Chinese companies in Congress. However, during their confirmation hearings in early Jan-

uary 2025, both acknowledged that preventing an escalation of conflict with China is a fundamental policy option.

In response to the US government's South China Sea policies under the new Trump administration, China should continue to maintain its military deterrence while actively advancing economic, diplomatic and social engagement. China will deepen its cooperation with ASEAN countries, firmly safeguarding its core interests in sovereignty, development and security in the South China Sea. At the same time, it will continue to promote the construction of a maritime community with a shared future, working toward making the South China Sea a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation. China will also push forward the signing and implementation of the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and deepen economic and social facilitation measures under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, enhancing the regional economic win-win framework.

Meanwhile, China should strengthen cooperation with ASEAN countries in port development, digital infrastructure and cultural exchanges through the high-quality building of the Belt and Road. Finally, China should bolster communication and dialogue between governments and militaries with the US, enhance the strategic trust-building mechanism, and promote military exchanges at the theater level. This will help effectively prevent any unforeseen incidents that could lead to military conflict, ensuring that China-US relations continue to evolve into a stable, mature framework for both competition and cooperation, with better management of tensions.

The author is dean of the School of International Studies at Nanjing University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GUO JIGUANG AND ZHANG JIE

New security dynamics

Beijing eyes building a community with a shared future with neighboring countries amid China-US competition

Amid profound shifts in the balance of global powers, intensifying strategic competition among big powers has complicated the security situation in China's four surrounding subregions. With Donald Trump's return to the White House, the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy might face a transformation which will further increase strategic anxiety and policy adjustments among China's neighboring countries, introducing additional uncertainties to its security environment.



Guo Jiguang



Zhang Jie

and Central Asia remain relatively stable, Northeast Asia has evolved into a state of strategic division, and the standoff in South Asia appear to be easing.

After the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2022, Japan and the Republic of Korea followed the United States in sanctioning Russia, while the US has been perceived as seeking to turn Northeast Asia into a key military pillar of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy by strengthening US-Japan and US-ROK bilateral alliances and the US-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation.

In response, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea signed the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2024, signaling a vague military alliance to enhance strategic coordination.

Against this backdrop, the region's "anxiety over the DPRK's nuclear issue" has evolved to be a broader strategic confrontation, exerting long-term pressure on regional stability.

In South Asia, India, leveraging its economic and military strengths, has gained dominance over South Asian affairs. The US supports India playing the role of a leading power and a regional pillar in South Asia and the Indian Ocean; in return, India accepts the US' presence in countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka. Perceiving China's growing influence to be a strategic challenge, the US and India have been collaborating to curb China's influence in South Asia, pushing the region toward bloc confrontation. However, by late 2024, India initiated cautious steps to reduce frictions with China, potentially creating space for the regional de-escalation.

The ongoing Ukraine crisis has weakened Russia's influence over Central Asia, prompting a return of other outside powers to the region and intensifying geopolitical competition. The US and its Western allies seek to strengthen ties with Central Asia through high-profile engagements and economic cooperation, while Russia relies on the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union to maintain its influence in the region.

Against such a background, the five Central Asian countries increased their strategic autonomy. Under the "C5+1" mechanism, the five countries have been holding summits with China, the US and Russia, respectively, while expanding cooperation with the European Union, the Middle East and India, aiming to broaden their diplomatic

space and better manage the impact brought by great power rivalry.

Southeast Asia remains relatively stable amid the current global turbulence and keeps a strong momentum of economic growth. Adhering to a strategy of striking a balance among major powers, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been trying to steer major powers toward development and cooperation and to maintain ASEAN's centrality in the regional security architecture, as envisioned in the ASEAN's Outlook on the "Indo-Pacific".

Despite divergent security dynamics, the four neighboring subregions share several common trends: the return of traditional security on the regional security agenda, the growing trend of overstretching the security concept, and the shared aspirations for maintaining regional stability and cooperation. Therefore, China's overall regional security situation remains stable and manageable, but uncertainties regarding future development are growing.

First, traditional security issues are regaining prominence on the agenda of regional security. Under the impact of the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy and the Ukraine crisis, military exercises in China's neighboring regions have significantly increased in scale, frequency and provocativeness. Some neighboring countries are either leaning further toward US-led alliances or boosting their own defense capabilities, fueling a regional arms race. The US has been leveraging hotspots such as the South China Sea disputes, Taiwan question and the DPRK's nuclear threat to strengthen its alliances in the region, thus exacerbating tensions

in existing flashpoints.

Second, pan-securitization has heightened systemic confrontation in regional security. The US' China policy overstretching the concept of security. In addition to military deterrence against China, the US has tried to link industry, technology and capital with security. At the same time, the US has exerted pressure on countries such as Japan, the ROK, India and even some Southeast Asian nations, to decouple from China, pushing Asia, once grounded in economic mutual benefit, into the deep waters of bloc-based competition.

Finally, peace and development remain a regional consensus among China's neighboring countries despite intensified great power rivalry and bloc confrontation. Even the US does not want large-scale military conflict with China. Instead, it seeks to contain China with "integrated deterrence". Meanwhile, China advocates an open and inclusive regional order through nonmilitary means. Therefore, China's overall peripheral security environment remains relatively stable and controllable.

Trump's return to power has significant impacts on the security environment around China. His China-containment policies have stoked tensions for bilateral relations, and China's neighboring countries also face pressure from big-power rivalry. Moreover, the "America First" agenda, particularly the recent imposition of tariffs, has jeopardized the economic development of neighboring countries, and undermined regional cooperation.

In response, more countries are gravitating toward the Global South to collectively gain greater voice and influence in international



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

affairs. This will help diversify the region, and have a significant influence on the regional order.

As a major country, China should adopt a clear strategy with refined tactics. On the one hand, China should strengthen neighboring countries' strategic trust in China and mitigate the uncertainties brought by the Trump administration. This serves as the foundation for building a community with a shared future with neighboring countries.

On the other hand, China should pursue tailored diplomatic approaches to meet the unique development and security needs of each neighboring country or subregion. Priority should be given to implementing China's three global initiatives (namely, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global

Civilization Initiative) in the neighboring regions, enhancing security through development, supporting development with stability, and promoting regional cooperation through people-to-people exchanges. With this, China can work with neighboring countries to jointly build a community with a shared future.

Guo Jiguang is an assistant professor at the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhang Jie is a professor at the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LIFE

For culture enthusiasts, island lovers, luxury shoppers and families from China, touring Malaysia opens up many options, and more are to come.

Malaysia has adopted a plan to attract 7 million Chinese tourists annually by 2026, capitalizing on the explosive growth spurred by its visa-free policy and diverse tours for Chinese citizens.

Malaysia expects the plan to contribute significantly to its overall goal of 35.6 million international visitors, says Aaron Gan Chai Heng, director of the Tourism Malaysia Shanghai.

To achieve this target, Malaysia will increase the number of direct flights connecting various Chinese cities and make the most of the popular travel route connecting Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to boost multi-destination tourism, Gan says.

"For this year, there is definitely a plan to increase direct flights, but these are subject to talks between the airlines and the airport authorities of Malaysia and China."

In addition, seasonal chartered flights from second-tier cities to a few new destinations on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia are being discussed, apart from the normal charter flights to destinations such as Semporna and Langkawi.

Malaysia will also conduct more targeted marketing campaigns in China to promote its attractions and work with major Chinese online travel agencies to offer exclusive packages, he says.

China and Malaysia agreed to extend mutual visa-free policy last year. China has extended the facility until the end of this year, and Malaysia will extend the visa exemption for Chinese travelers until the end of next year, according to a joint statement by the two countries.

The mutual visa exemption policy has been in place since December 2023, and the Malaysian tourism market has had a big influx of Chinese tourists.

Malaysia's Minister of Transport, Loke Siew Fook, says that in the first year of the visa-free policy, about 4 million Chinese tourists visited Malaysia. Malaysia could serve as a gateway for Chinese tourists traveling to Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, he says.

The visa-free policy implemented in December 2023 has significantly boosted arrivals, with a 190 percent increase in Chinese tourists by mid-2024 compared with the previous year, Gan says.

"The introduction of a visa-free policy as well as auto-gate entry upon arrival at Kuala Lumpur



Malaysia proving to be a hot tourist draw card

Relaxation of visa rules has helped spur much greater demand, Yang Feiyue reports.



Top: At Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Chinese visitors receive gifts from staff from the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board in January. Above: Fair-goers enjoy the three-day "Welcome to China" tourism promotion in June in the Malaysian capital. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WENZONG / XINHUA



International Airport for Chinese nationals has been a major factor in this resurgence," he says, adding that Chinese tourists are spending more, with average spending ranging from 5,000-6,000 yuan (\$685-\$820) per trip.

"This is higher than the average tourist spend, reflecting a trend toward more luxury and tailored experiences."

Malaysia has emerged as a top outbound destination for Chinese travelers, says Li Mengran, marketing manager of Utour, a travel agency in Beijing.

The country's visa-free policy has significantly boosted travel demand from China, giving rise to notable growth in the trip bookings, Li says.

"For culture enthusiasts, the country provides immersive heritage tours featuring Kuala Lumpur city sights as well as activities such as watching historical theater performances at Encore Melaka Theatre, riding vintage trams and exploring Peranakan culture through museum visits and traditional costume workshops."

Island getaways represent another major draw, with destinations such as Sipadan for diving and Redang Island, where the popular Chinese movie *Summer Holiday*, was filmed.

"The trend of island-hopping packages has taken off, offering stays at scenic resorts and a range of water activities from snorkeling to sea kayaking," Li says. "These picturesque locations, complete with overwater villas and pristine sandbars, have proved particularly appealing for social media-savvy younger Chinese travelers."

More than 80 percent of Utour customers who are under 40 have opted for visits to those island destinations, such as Sabah and Semporna, Li says.

Travel by families has flourished as well, with Legoland Malaysia Resort a big draw for parents and children, Li says.

"Malaysia's repeat-visit potential is huge. Many explore cities first, then return for islands."

To spice up travel for Chinese, more tailored visits are being prepared, including luxury shopping, cultural heritage tours and eco-friendly destinations, Gan says.

Mandarin-speaking services and Alipay and WeChat Pay will be made more widely available, he says.

"These strategies aim not only to increase the number of visitors but also enhance their overall experience and spending in Malaysia."

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

French artist finds inspiration in Beijing's streets and the character *kou*

By LI YINGXUE
liyngxue@chinadaily.com.cn

When French artist and architect Clara Bryon arrived in Beijing this past February, she wasn't just visiting — she was observing. With a keen eye for form, texture and space, she took in the layers of the city's architecture as not just structures but silent storytellers.

As one of the 2024 laureates of the Yishu 8 France-China Young Artist Award, Bryon spent two months in residence at Yishu 8, an art platform housed in the former Sino-French University. Her daily walks through the city — from the steps of Jingshan Park to the threshold of her *hutong* home — became the foundation for 18 artworks now on view in her solo exhibition *Kou: Opening*, which runs through May 16 as part of the 19th Croisements Festival.

Doors and windows — recurring themes in Bryon's architectural research — emerge as focal points. In Beijing, she was especially drawn to the Chinese character *kou*, a square form found in words like "entrance" and "exit".

"Its shape really touched me: It represents my work in both form and meaning," she says. "So, I decided it would be the name of the exhibition."

Born in 1990, Bryon holds a degree in architecture from the National Superior School of Architecture of Montpellier and is based in the same city. Inspired by architects such as Tadao Ando and Louis Kahn, Bryon explores light as a central theme in her paintings.

Her work balances strength and subtlety, often evoking a surreal or purely abstract aesthetic.



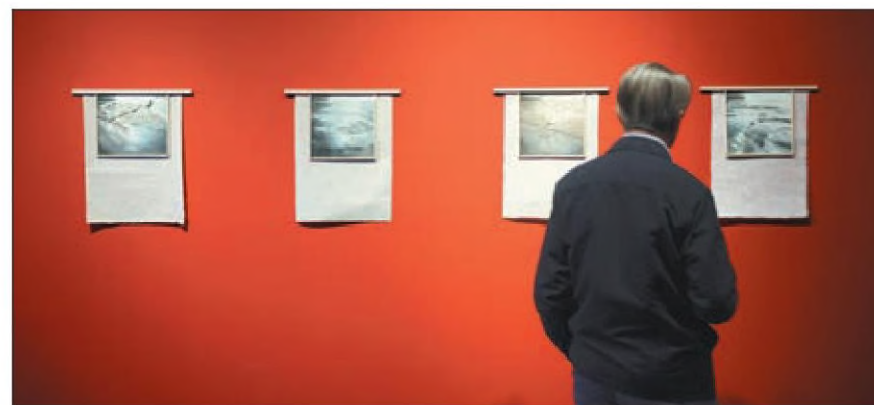
“But once you live here (Beijing), life feels gentle. The gray takes on the color of the sun and becomes a neutral texture...”

Clara Bryon,
French artist and architect

In recent years, Bryon has presented both solo and group exhibitions in cities such as Paris and Montpellier in France and Liege in Belgium.

Christine Cayol, founder of Yishu 8, describes Bryon's journey to Beijing as a deliberate immersion into Chinese architecture, a way to explore the intricate dialogue between openness and enclosure, light and shadow, stillness and motion.

"From the Forbidden City to tradi-



Top: A visitor appreciates Bryon's paintings in Beijing. Left: Bryon uses wooden lattice frames on her paintings. Far left: One of the largest works of the exhibition. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tional *siheyuan* courtyards, her eyes moved across architectural forms before settling on specific compositions and patterns," Cayol says.

"Bryon understands that the essence of life and art lies in restoring the flow of energy, in drawing strength from the rhythms of breath, within oneself and the universe. Her purpose in coming to Beijing was to undertake a rigorous explorative journey," Cayol adds.

Bryon spent her Beijing residency living in a *hutong*, an alleyway

courtyard residence. To her, the city revealed itself in quiet shades of gray.

"From roof tiles to bricks and paving stones, the materials that make up Beijing form a subdued backdrop," she says. "They highlight the delicacy of doors and windows. In *hutong*, these are few, discreet, and defensive. But every opening that allows a gaze or a passerby becomes enriched with colors, patterns and carvings."

Inspired by the season's first blos-

soms, the towering palace walls and the natural wood beams in her *hutong* home, Bryon continued her long-standing exploration of architectural thresholds. In Beijing, her Threshold series took on new life.

One of the largest works on display, *Window of the Square Courtyard I* stretches three meters wide. A wall ends at the upper left corner of the canvas, allowing light to spill across the ground, an image drawn from her Beijing walks.

Fourteen paintings from her Win-

dow of the Square Courtyard series are on display. All but the first are overlaid with wooden lattice frames.

"These windows captivate me. They're high and narrow and often blocked. In my paper-based works, you can just make out a threshold behind the grille, guiding the gaze through layers of obstruction. Even the borders of the paintings shift in response," she says.

The exhibition also includes four photographs from her First Spring Flowers series. Bryon photographed magnolias in local parks, placing handcrafted paper and wooden slats in the foreground like a curtain or frame. Only when a breeze moves the paper do the blossoms fully reveal themselves.

Beijing not only provided new inspiration but new materials as well. Traditional handmade paper became a core element in her creative process. "I worked with the paper for what it is — as an object — with its thickness, color, fibers and texture. It became an essential part of the work. Not a surface but a component," she says.

This was Bryon's first time in Asia and her first artist residency. She calls it a "powerful experience" in which she was drawn to the city's language, food and spiritual architecture.

"At first glance, Beijing seems austere: its streets gray, its traffic rigid, its scale immense. But once you live here, life feels gentle. The gray takes on the color of the sun and becomes a neutral texture that sets off doors, plants and street details," she says.

In the end, Beijing's thresholds, literal and metaphorical, became not just her subject but her way in, just like the character "*kou*."

LIFE



A clock with filigree inlay showcases collaboration among students and art masters.



A decorative plate fashioned through cloisonné craftwork. PHOTOS BY YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY

Art college's status redefines excellence

Students receive access to more resources as school cultivates future talents, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

In a well-lit studio, 18-year-old Dong Run shyly introduced a carved lacquer plaque to arts and crafts masters who stepped into an art school in early April.

The plaque features a rooster looking back at its plush tail feathers, with a canopy of cockscomb flowers above its head.

The rooster, known for its bright redhead comb, appears to be wearing a natural "crown", while the vivid red cockscomb flower's crest-like appearance resembles the rooster's head, Dong points out.

"The symbolism is rooted in both visual metaphor and linguistic play. When the flower is paired with the rooster in imagery or metaphor, it suggests adding a crown to something already crowned. This combination serves as a cultural emblem of layered excellence and distinguished status," she explains.

Whenever the veteran artists gave her an approving glance, Dong says her confidence was boosted and it encouraged her to go deeper into the details.

"If you look closer, you can see the rooster's neck feathers consist of hundreds of *sifang* flowers, a symmetrical floral motif that radiates outward in four directions, which symbolizes boundless growth," she says.

It took a month for her and two classmates to complete the work under the instruction of their mentor Wang Jianming, a carved lacquer expert with more than a decade of experience.

Seeing her work displayed publicly for the first time has helped Dong decide to pursue an art career.

"I've loved art since childhood. When it was time to choose a high school, I knew I wanted one that would let me grow as an artist," she recalls.

In 2022, this predisposition led her to the Beijing Senior Technical School of Arts and Crafts founded in 1980. It has recently been upgraded to the Beijing Arts and Crafts Technician College.

The status upgrade makes it one of the country's few technical colleges dedicated solely to arts and crafts education, according to authorities.

Dong's work is among more than 150 pieces on display at the *Crafting Dreams, Shaping Futures* exhibition. The exhibition opening coincided with the college's inauguration on April 8.

The exhibition features contemporary cultural and creative designs and folk arts highlighting *Yanjing Bajue* (the eight outstanding imperial handicrafts of Beijing), including cloisonné, jade carving, filigree inlay and gold lacquer inlay, exemplifying the excellence of Chinese arts and artists.

"They are collaborations between more than 20 resident masters and students. It's a manifest of our pedagogy," says Liu Jinfang, principal of the college.

She notes that the college's status will help to better align its educational mission with Beijing's role as a national cultural center.

"With a strong focus on arts and crafts, our school will steadily expand its influence in society while deepening international exchanges and enhancing collaboration between schools and industries," Liu says.

These efforts are expected to



Top: The Beijing Arts and Crafts Technician College opens in early April. **Above:** Visitors appreciate artworks at the exhibition at the newly upgraded art college. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

attract more young people to engage in the inheritance and development of traditional craftsmanship, contributing to the cultivation of skilled talent for the country's cultural development, she adds.

Liu deems the school's new status as recognition of its past efforts.

In 2024, five of its faculty members were granted the Beijing Arts and Crafts Master title.

"Under the guidance of these masters, we have implemented a talent training model that integrates learning with hands-on practice — an approach we describe as 'master-led, industry-integrated education,'" Liu explains.

Through this model, they have cultivated many highly skilled professionals in the arts and crafts field.

"Students progress through our six-year academic system, developing from novices into advanced technicians and even master-level artisans. Many graduates have gone on to excel in various sectors of the arts and crafts industry, becoming key contributors and leaders in their respective enterprises," she notes.

With the academy's upgraded status, Liu says it will expand partnerships with intangible cultural heritage institutions.

Wang, the lacquer carving instructor with the school, feels the upgrade will bring more opportunities to innovate teaching methods.

"We're particularly focused on deepening integrated, skill-based education that blends traditional craftsmanship with modern, crea-

tive thinking, such as interdisciplinary training and fostering students' abilities in technique and innovation," Wang says.

Over the years, the art school has actively refined its professional programs. One such program is paired with a national arts and crafts master, he says.

"This approach not only enhances our technical skills but also allows younger teachers to gain inspiration from students' creativity. It's a process built on collaborative innovation and mutual growth among master artisans, instructors and students," he says.

Duan Tiyu, chairman of Beijing Gongmei Group, one of the major forces behind the country's arts and crafts development, pledged continued collaboration with the college in talent development and industrial innovation, fostering a win-win partnership between education and enterprise.

The upgrade marks a momentous occasion for the group and the broader arts and crafts industry in the capital, Duan says.

"In this new era, a pressing question we face is how to blend traditional arts and crafts with contemporary concepts to develop highly skilled, innovative professionals who can meet the evolving market demand," Duan says.

"The institute's founding provides us with a critical platform and an excellent opportunity to address this challenge," he adds.

Duan hopes the college will further explore and preserve China's

outstanding traditional culture and integrate these unique cultural elements into education, so treasured legacies will be passed down and rejuvenated in the modern era.

He also proposes to combine industry and education to encourage teachers to take on different roles and keep pace with the latest techniques, which will enable them to update teaching content and improve instructional quality.

At the launch ceremony, Zhao Xiutao, deputy director of the vocational capacity development division of the Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, outlines the college's key priorities in strengthening academic management, expanding infrastructure and enrollment, enhancing faculty development, and increasing advanced technician training.

Wang Xiaobing, also from the Beijing bureau, commends the college's accomplishments in vocational education and urges further progress in industry-academia integration, advancing cultural innovation, and strengthening international exchanges.

Dong expects to gain access to rich learning resources and interact with more senior craftsmen because of her school's higher status.

From her experience, she emphasizes that the school's greatest strength lies in its resource of legendary artisans.

Under the guidance of carved lacquer art masters like Li Zhigang and Wang, students receive hands-on training rarely available elsewhere.

"They inspect every detail of our work and demonstrate corrections in person," Dong says.

"Once, while carving the intricate floral patterns for the rooster's neck, I struggled for days. The petals were tiny and my cuts kept going awry. I almost gave up," she says, recalling one of her setbacks.

But the masters' patience became her lifeline. "They'd sit beside us, showing us how to steady the blade. Slowly, I improved."

With the school's upgraded resources, Dong eagerly looks ahead.

"The school didn't just teach me a skill, it connected me to a lineage of artists. One day, I hope I can contribute to the field," she says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn



Ismaila Ikani Sule (standing, second from right) poses with Shaolin martial arts performers at the China Cultural Center in Abuja, Nigeria. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A source of fascination and lifelong inspiration



By ISMAILA IKANI SULE
For China Daily

China has been a source of fascination for much of my life, right from my childhood reading stories about the great country of the East in comics and storybooks to watching kung fu (which I'd later learn the word is actually *gongfu*) movies.

Being exposed to reading and writing in English and in Arabic, like so many other children growing up in Nigeria, also made me quite curious about Chinese calligraphy. As an artist, I also admired and still admire artistic brushstrokes featured in Chinese calligraphy displayed in books and on television.

Now as an adult, China's place in the modern world with the country's amazing technological, economic and social advancements has only increased my interest in learning more about China and the Chinese people.

Progress, stability and development in Nigeria, as with other growing nations around the world, is vital to ensure a good quality of life for its citizens. History has shown that no country, nation or civilization can live in isolation. People need to learn from each other, trade and exchange ideas while respecting each other's sovereignty and independence. China has proved itself to be a willing development friend and partner to countries like Nigeria. It is just time for those other countries (again, Nigeria especially) to also stand up for themselves, be recognized and respected.

Some of the earliest stories I heard about the Chinese came from my grandfather, Sani Akpa. He was a World War II veteran and one of the many Nigerians who formed part of the African troops used by the British and their allies to fight the Japanese in Burma, now Myanmar. He told us about his adventures in the jungles of Burma, back in 1944. The troops fighting the Japanese were a mix of Africans, Indians, Chinese and others. My grandfather told us about the British and American soldiers. He told us about the Indian soldiers who would not eat beef. And he told us about the Chinese soldiers whom he said liked to smile a lot — they sounded really friendly to us.

My father was a civil engineer. He had also been very interested in the solutions Chinese engineers were developing indigenously to solve their local problems. I got to learn about China's drive to technological development from the 1960s, '70s and onward. As part of our general education, my father also got me and my siblings to

learn about the famous Silk Road history of China which played a major role in trade and civilization in ancient history.

It will come as no surprise then that as with the advent of the wide use of the internet in Nigeria from the early 2000s, I got the means of exploring China even further. Back when the internet was new, and even today, many of us were excited to make friends (pen pals) with different people all across the world. By 2001, aside from Nigerians, I had a Scottish, an American and a Chinese pen pal. Twenty-four years later today, my Chinese pen pal has remained the only one I frequently chat with. We frequently write about visiting each other's countries someday.

In 2006, I got an admission to the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, to study for a Master's degree in Information Technology. I'll say this also — the Scots are very friendly people with a rich history of academics and discoveries. During my Master's program I made more Chinese-speaking friends.

It would be several years later after I returned to Nigeria from Scotland that I would have another encounter with the world of the Chinese. In 2023, one of my colleagues at work at the National Identity Management Commission in Abuja, Nigeria, told me about the Chinese language course he was taking. I was really intrigued and asked him where he was taking the course. It turned out that the China Cultural Center in Abuja, which was very close to my office (across the road), had been providing light Chinese language classes for students of all ages. In addition, cultural events and salons were also hosted at the center. I immediately registered for the language classes, as soon as the new session for the year began.

The journey since then as a part-time Chinese language student has been one of hard work and challenges, but immense satisfaction and beautiful discovery. I get to learn to speak, read and write in Mandarin with my fellow classmates and our teacher. We all get to attend events at the center and learn more about Chinese culture, society, art, calligraphy, photography, films, technological development, and much more. I am particularly glad I get to try out Chinese calligraphy a little bit every now and then — I'm still very much a beginner.

The author works at the National Identity Management Commission in Nigeria where they handle matters related to the national identity scheme for citizens and legal residents. He is in charge of NIMC's website — handling content and web design/development. He is also a part-time Chinese language student at the China Cultural Center in Abuja.

Share your unique perspective on China

This is your chance to get published! "My China Moments" — an international collection of essays, videos and visual works compiled by China Daily — is now open for submissions. The initiative seeks diverse stories and insights from foreigners in China.

Written articles, videos and other visual works in English can be submitted for consideration.

Selected pieces will be published, with attribution, on platforms such as the China Daily website and China

Daily app along with digital platforms and social media accounts.

A number of articles will also be published, with attribution, in China Daily.

Culturally themed gifts will be offered and contributors may be invited to attend offline events organized by China Daily.



Online
Scan the QR code for details.

LIFE

Inside a sprawling, architecturally striking white building, a comedy unfolded. Though it lasted only 10 minutes, the play, *Sky Trap*, which was based on an airline conducting a rehearsal for an anti-hijacking drill, with chaos ensuing when the crew unexpectedly encounters a real armed criminal attempting to hijack the flight, was both hilarious and gripping. It was just one of a series of productions being presented that day.

Offstage, four special audience members sat in the front row, focused intently on the play. They weren't just there to be entertained — they also had the responsibility of deciding whether it would receive financial support to be developed into a full-length show.

The four were Shen Teng and Ma Li, who are both actors, director Feng Xiaogang, and actor-filmmaker Xu Zheng — the top celebrities in Chinese comedy cinema — and their job was to vote for the most appealing shows, which were awarded bonuses ranging from 200,000 yuan (\$27,295) to 500,000 yuan.

The competition — a pitch session in which six productions had 10 minutes to prove their worth — was one of the most anticipated segments of the second Macao International Comedy Festival, held in Hengqin in Guangdong province and the Macao Special Administrative Region from April 9 to 13.

They were short-listed from over 300 submissions, which encompassed a variety of styles, including urban comedies, absurdist plays, and dark humor, according to the organizers.

Sky Trap took the Best Creative Award, while the Best Storytelling Award — the competition's biggest honor — went to *Parenting 40+: Son Not Found*, a fantasy comedy about a father waiting outside the delivery room, who encounters an angel with the power to grant him an ideal child.

As an annual event designed to attract top comedy performers, creators and filmmakers from China and abroad, the festival drew a string of celebrities, including Indian star Aamir Khan, Japanese actor-director Takeshi Kitano, director Jeffrey Lau, and comedian Bai Ke.

Keys to female success

The five-day festival, which consisted of multiple events such as new movie screenings and forums, opened a window on the keys to making successful comedies, as well as the challenges upcoming artists face.

Ma, who launched the festival along with Shen, shared her early experience of having to overcome difficulties to pursue her artistic dreams.

After graduating from the Central Academy of Drama and finishing an advanced program at Peking University, Ma joined the popular comedy troupe Mahua FunAge in 2005, and has performed in over 100 plays since. She gained wider recognition after debuting alongside Shen during the 2013 China Central Television Spring Festival Gala — one of the country's longest-running television programs, which is watched by millions on Chinese New Year Eve.



The second Macao International Comedy Festival attracted a string of celebrities, with the most famous faces including (from left) Japanese actor-director Takeshi Kitano, actor Shen Teng, Indian star Aamir Khan, actress Ma Li, actor-director Xu Zheng, and director Feng Xiaogang. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A festival of laughter

Pitch session highlight of annual Macao comedy event, as stars share their secrets, **Xu Fan** reports.



Top: Initiators of the festival, Shen Teng (second left) and Ma Li (second right), share insights about making successful comedies with Bollywood star Aamir Khan (left) during the closing forum, hosted by scriptwriter Peter Chiarelli, who is known for the Hollywood blockbuster *Crazy Rich Asians*. Above: Scenes from *Sky Trap* (left) and *Parenting 40+: Son Not Found* (right), two of the six short-listed plays selected from a pool of over 300 entries to the festival's pitch competition.

At the start of her career, Ma would wake up early to catch buses to auditions for movies and TV series, seeking out even the smallest acting opportunities. The auditions were not always pleasant.

"One director once told me, 'you should either be uglier or more beautiful. You're stuck in the middle — an actress like you has no future. And your personality is too introverted.' He even suggested I change careers," Ma said during a forum on career challenges faced by female comedians.

Her self-confidence shaken, she decided that from that point on, she would stop auditioning for film and TV roles, and focus instead on steady work in the theater.

"Often, fate works this way — when you stop craving and demand-

ing, opportunities come to you," she says.

Through powerful stage performances, she attracted film industry attention, earning her the lead role in *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, the biggest dark horse hit of 2015. It catapulted Ma to stardom, lifting her to A-list status and leading her to star in more comedy blockbusters like *Never Say Die* (2017) and *Moon Man* (2022).

Understanding the unfair treatment faced by female comedians who are not yet established, Ma says that she feels a strong sense of care for female characters in a script.

"When you're just starting out, it is often hard to get your opinion about female characters accepted.

At the time, all I could do was grit my teeth, because there was the

pressure of making a living to support my family. But now, I can choose stories that truly move and inspire me," she says.

She has taken on another highly anticipated role in the upcoming film *The Dumpling Queen*, which is inspired by the famous story of Zang Jianhe, a single mother who went from street vendor to business mogul as founder of one of Hong Kong's biggest food companies.

Lau, who is from Hong Kong and whose most famous previous films include *All for the Winner*, says that despite the relatively low budget, he was drawn to the project and volunteered to direct because the female protagonist reminded him of his mother, who encouraged his childhood passion for art.

Striking a balance

From theater to cinema, the festival was filled with joy. The question of how to make the audience laugh — and how to strike the right balance of humor in a cross-cultural context — was among the key topics of discussion.

Khan, whose wrestling-themed film *Dangal* was a hit in the Chinese mainland in 2017, emphasizes that timing is crucial to good comedy. He received the Mr. Humor Award, one of the festival's most prestigious honors.

"Comedy does require something special. Half a second earlier or late, and the punch line is not as effective," he says, adding that whether in situational comedy or slapstick, timing is essential — both in delivering dialogue and

executing physical humor.

Khan says he's always believed that to go global, creators must first be local because the more rooted a film is in its culture, the more universally it can resonate.

When asked about improvisation, which sometimes adds unexpected comedy, Khan said he doesn't like to improvise without asking the writers in advance.

"Whenever I've improvised — even if an idea comes to me when neither the director nor the writer is present — I always reach out to tell them what I'm thinking. I want to know how they feel. I believe in the importance of writing because that's where everything about cinema starts," he says.

For Shen, one of China's most popular comedic actors, comedy is like an entertaining shell wrapped around serious social issues in a lighthearted and audience-friendly package.

Taking his film *Successor* as an example, he explains that comedy can avoid being preachy while encouraging viewers to focus on social issues and contemplate deep questions.

An in-depth exploration of "helicopter parenting" — a typical phenomenon in many parts of the world — *Successor* is the story of a wealthy businessman and his wife who pretend to be poor to encourage their youngest son to study hard and secure a promising future. The film earned over 3.3 billion yuan at the box office, becoming one of the highest-grossing blockbusters last year.

Takeshi Kitano, whose best-known comedy is the 1999 road film *Kikujiro*, says that his early artistic experience in small theaters prepared him well for film, and that the idea of making a film of his own also first came from the stage.

Revealing his fondness for Asian comedies — exemplified by his voice role for the Japanese dub of Hong Kong's *The Private Eyes*, which was released as *Mr. Boo!* in Japan — Kitano says that he is passionate about Chinese comedies.

He also says that he plans to collaborate with Bai Ke on his upcoming film, with the script scheduled for completion by autumn, and shooting set to begin by the end of this year.

For most festival participants, the event was a bridge for cultural exchange and creative inspiration.

Peter Chiarelli, the American screenwriter behind *Crazy Rich Asians* — one of Hollywood's most successful Asian-led comedies — says his visit to China will allow him to learn from others, take inspiration back home, and create even better work.

"Language barriers can be tricky with comedy — if you're structuring a joke and the phrasing doesn't translate, that's a challenge. But you do find crossover in certain universal themes," he adds.

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn



Online
Scan the
code to
watch the
video.

Flying display of cultural ties at Siem Reap's airport

By WANG RU in Beijing and LIYINGQING in Kunming

Animal images play significant roles in every civilization. In Cambodia, the Naga, a snake deity shared by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, is seen as the guardian of national prosperity, and symbolizes auspiciousness and peace. In Yunnan province just across the border, cattle enjoyed similar cultural connotations of prosperity and wealth during the Dian kingdom, which existed from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220).

An ongoing exhibition by the Yunnan International Communication Center for South and Southeast Asia and the Yunnan Provincial Museum in Cambodia's Siem Reap Angkor International Airport's China-Cambodia cultural corridor shines a light on the two symbolic animals through 70 photos and 55 items of handicrafts, highlighting a link between Yunnan and Cambodia.

The photos are of artifacts and folk customs, and the handicrafts include replicas of artifacts and the cultural and creative products



Left: Passengers at an exhibition about historical cultural similarities between cattle and snakes in the China-Cambodia cultural corridor in the Siem Reap Angkor International Airport in February, as seen through the artifacts and folk customs of Yunnan and Cambodia. Right: A bronze replica of an artifact showing a cow being bitten by a tiger while protecting its calf. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

derived from them.

According to Zhang Ruogu, deputy director of the Yunnan International Communication Center for South and Southeast Asia, the display not only highlights the beauty of Dian bronze culture in Yunnan, but also the beauty of ancient Cambodian civilization.

"Through the two elements of the auspicious cattle and the spirit

snake, the exhibition explores the spiritual beliefs associated with them and illustrates the rich history and culture of Yunnan and Cambodia to passengers using the airport," says Zhang.

He adds that the cultures of parts of Southeast Asia and Yunnan are closely connected, laying a foundation for dialogue and understanding.



"China and Cambodia share close geographical proximity and cultural affinity. From the Maritime Silk Road facilitating trade exchange, to Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) Admiral Zheng He's seven voyages (during which he landed in present-day Cambodia), the two countries have a deep friendship cultivated over millennia that exemplifies cultural

exchange," he says.

Guo Jia, director of the research and exchange department at the Yunnan Provincial Museum, says one of the highlights of the exhibition is a replica bronze animal ritual vessel, one of the museum's most famous exhibits, which is believed to have been used for sacrifices.

The vessel is in the form of a large cow, its tail in the grip of a tiger, with a baby cow beneath its belly. It appears to depict a mother cow protecting its calf from attack. "The shape illuminates the ancient Dian people's concepts of life and death and their mastery of advanced bronze casting techniques," says Guo.

She adds that as important source of labor in farming, the Dian viewed cattle as symbols of family wealth. Appearing often on Dian bronzes, they are viewed as symbols of Yunnan's Bronze Age civilization and this artifact is an outstanding example.

Likewise in Cambodia, a nation rooted in agriculture, cattle enjoy prominence. They play essential roles in Buddhist culture, and prominently feature on artifacts

and in everyday life.

Snake patterns can be seen at most temples in Cambodia, while the Dian also used snake depiction on their artifacts.

Siem Reap is famous for the Angkor Wat temple complex, and the Cambodian artifacts on display, including wooden carvings, Buddhist statues and lacquerware, are mostly related to the site.

"Through the exhibition we are showing the connections and comparisons between the culture around snakes and cattle in Yunnan and Cambodia," says Zhang.

The China-Cambodia cultural corridor is located in the international arrival and departure areas of the airport, which was put into use in August last year. From Aug 1 to Jan 31, the corridor received more than 780,000 visits, according to Yang Shaokai, general manager of Yunnan Airinvestment (Cambodia) Airport Management, which runs the airport.

Neth Pheakra, Cambodia's Minister of Information, says the airport "is the first gate through which international passengers enter Siem Reap". He believes the exhibition will surprise and inform tourists from around the world.

Contact the writers at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn