

New beginnings

Panda pair departs Chengdu for Austria to start decade-long stay CHINA, PAGE 4



Car exports surge in Q1 despite woes BUSINESS, PAGE 10



Growing opposition

Meeting condemns attempts to displace Gaza residents WORLD, PAGE 6

# CHINA DAILY

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## China, Azerbaijan elevate partnership

Countries agree to enhance all-around cooperation amid complex intl changes

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Azerbaijan elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership on Wednesday, a move that marks the countries' commitment to enhancing all-around cooperation amid complex changes in the international landscape.

President Xi Jinping and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, who started his three-day state visit to China on Tuesday, announced the upgrading of bilateral relations during their talks in Beijing.

The two leaders witnessed the signing of 20 documents on cooperation in areas such as the Belt and Road Initiative, justice, green development, the digital economy, intellectual property rights and aerospace.

During the meeting, Xi highlighted that supporting each other on issues concerning their core interests is not only a fine tradition between China and Azerbaijan, but also a rightful obligation as strategic partners.

Both countries should continuously enhance political mutual trust, deepen pragmatic cooperation and strengthen international coordination to open a new chapter of all-around cooperation, he said.

The two countries are ready to initiate negotiations on a free-trade agreement to provide a high-level institutional safeguard for them to deepen trade and investment cooperation, according to a joint statement on the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Azerbaijan, which was signed by Xi and Aliyev after their talks.

Both sides highly appreciate their cooperation in the field of transportation, and are committed to promoting the construction of transportation infrastructure and enhancing logistics efficiency in order to facilitate mutual connectivity in the region, the statement said.

In the statement, China also expressed its support for Azerbaijan's accession to the World Trade Organization.

Both sides support promoting trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, oppose unilateralism, protectionism and hegemony, oppose actions that undermine international trade rules, and jointly safeguard the multilateral trading system to achieve shared prosperity, the statement said.

Xi told Aliyev that tariff and trade wars undermine the legitimate rights and interests of all countries, hurt the multilateral trading system, and disrupt the world economic order.

China is willing to work with Azerbaijan to safeguard the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law, firmly protect their respective legitimate rights and interests, and defend international fairness and justice, he said.

Xi also expressed China's support for Azerbaijan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and in continuing to pursue a development path that suits its national conditions.

China is willing to intensify law enforcement and security cooperation with Azerbaijan to resolutely combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, extremism and separatism, he said.

Xi called on both countries to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, enhance the alignment of development strategies, and strengthen people-to-people bonds through educational, cultural, tourism, youth and subnational exchanges.

China has become one of Azerbaijan's key



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for visiting Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at the square outside the east gate of the Great Hall of the People prior to their talks in Beijing on Wednesday. Aliyev started his three-day state visit to China on Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

economic partners, with bilateral trade increasing over 43 percent in 2024, amounting to \$2.46 billion, according to statistics from the General Administration of Customs.

At the recent China-Azerbaijan Industrial and Investment Cooperation Promotion Conference held in Beijing, Azerbaijan signed agreements on 13 projects with Chinese institutions and enterprises, covering areas such as the digital economy, aluminum capacity expansion, and the establishment of agricultural machinery production sites.

During Wednesday's talks, Aliyev hailed the sound development of bilateral ties, saying that despite the profound changes in the inter-

national order, Azerbaijan and China have always respected and trusted each other, with cooperation deepening continuously.

He assured Xi that Azerbaijan firmly abides by the one-China principle, insists that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and supports all efforts made by the Chinese government to achieve national reunification.

Aliyev commended Xi's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, saying that the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, all proposed by Xi, are conducive to world peace, stability and prosperity.

Azerbaijan is willing to deepen its comprehensive strategic partnership with China, and expand cooperation with China in areas such as the BRI, the digital economy, green energy, and science and technology, he said.

Aliyev attended separate meetings on Wednesday with Premier Li Qiang, and Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

Also on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov signed an agreement on mutual visa exemption for ordinary passport holders, in order to facilitate mutual visits.

## UN envoy: Uphold trading system

By MINLU ZHANG at the United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

China's ambassador to the United Nations on Wednesday said that US tariffs were "advancing hegemonic interests of the US at the cost of the legitimate interests of all countries".

The tariff policy "severely infringes upon the legitimate rights and interests of all countries, severely violates the WTO rules, severely undermines the rules-based multilateral trading system, and severely disrupts the global economic order", said Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN.

He spoke at the UN Security Council Arria-formula, or informal, meeting on the impact of unilateralism and bullying practices on international relations on Wednesday. The meeting was hosted by China and attended by representatives from more than 80 countries.

"The US is playing a zero-sum game, which is essentially about subverting the existing international economic and trade order by means of tariffs, putting the US interests above the common good of the international community, and advancing hegemonic interests of the US at the cost of the legitimate interests of all countries," he said.

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### WORLD WATCH

By Christine Loh

## Nation steps in to assume lead in global climate fight

Climate records were shattered again in 2024. Global surface temperatures soared 1.55 C above preindustrial levels, making it the warmest year in 175 years of meteorological record keeping. Every year of the past decade now ranks among the 10 hottest years recorded.

Oceans are absorbing unprecedented heat, glaciers are retreating, and atmospheric concentrations of warming greenhouse gases have reached levels not seen in 800,000 years.

A March report from the World Meteorological Organization paints a grim picture. The agency's State of the Global Climate report confirms that 2024 surpassed 2023 as the hottest year on record, crossing the 1.5 C threshold set by the multilateral Paris Agreement a decade ago.

This is a dangerous signpost.

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## Ready for launch



Members of the Shenzhou XX crew, mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong (center), Colonel Chen Zhongrui (right) and Colonel Wang Jie, will begin their six-month orbital stay on Thursday onboard China's Tiangong space station. XINHUA See story, page 3

## BEIJING'S BIRDS OF PREY A NEW CHALLENGE FOR CITY

Public awareness, rescue efforts ramped up to protect increasing raptor populations

By XIN WEN xinwen@chinadaily.com.cn

Not long after sunrise, a group of crows encircled a Northern eagle owl that had been hovering for a lengthy period over Houhai Lake in downtown Beijing.

The exhausted eagle owl eventually dropped into the water. The bird flapped its wings and struggled to stay afloat as it tried to protect itself from the crows that appeared ready to attack.

A passerby, who had gone to the lake for



breakfast, noticed the distressed eagle owl's predicament.

He parked his electric bicycle, and tried to rescue the bird. Concerned onlookers told him he should be wearing gloves to protect against the eagle owl's sharp talons. Others fetched brooms to aid the rescue effort.

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## PAGE TWO

## Raptors: Restored back to urban wilderness

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Luckily, the eagle owl managed to reach the shore and was able to latch onto a broom extended by an onlooker. In the afternoon, the bird was sent to the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center for treatment.

Such life-and-death survival battles in the natural world usually take place in the wilderness. But the March 8 confrontation was filmed in an urban center of the nation's capital, and the unusual setting led to the video being widely circulated online.

## City predators

Owls are listed as a national protected animal in China, and considered a top predator in the capital city. Zheng Zhishan, manager of the rescue center, said the eagle owl is the largest wild owl species in Beijing. It usually stands at a maximum height just above 70 centimeters, and can weigh more than 5 kilograms.

"When a raptor appears as a top predator in a particular region, it can easily create a ripple effect among nearby birds, causing them to 'pounce' on it to protect their territory," Zheng said.

She said all bird species are wary of raptors — the top avian predators — as they pose a threat to their survival.

Sun Quanhui, a scientist with World Animal Protection, said eagle owls are relatively large and mainly prey on small birds and mammals such as hares and pheasants.

"Eagle owls are less likely to be found in densely populated urban areas, and are mostly found in the outer suburbs of the city," Sun said.

"A possible reason for the appearance of the eagle owl at Houhai Lake is that the ecological environment of Beijing has improved significantly in recent years. The population of eagle owls in mountainous and suburban areas has continued to grow, with some individuals inadvertently entering into the city center in search of new living spaces," he said.

On March 19, raptor rescue center staff conducted a full examination of the rescued eagle owl. Zhou Lei, a rehabilitator who has worked at the center for more than a decade, and her colleague, Dai Chang, started the assessment by placing the eagle owl on a clean sheet.

The eagle owl's body was still wet, and the color of the skin under the feathers looked abnormal in some areas.

"Later we found it might be because the eagle owl struggled a long time in the river," Zhou said, adding they found an old fracture of the bird's keel bone.

"In the artificial environments, wild animals easily get stressed, so its appetite was not good in the early stages of rehabilitation," she said. "Its initial weight was 1,916 grams. Now it weighs 1,790 grams, which means it may have had a bad intestine and stomach, and needed further treatment."

The fullness of the eagle owl's pectoral muscles, an indicator of a bird's fitness, was low, she added.

"To keep it healthy and help it return to nature as soon as possible, we injected it with a nutrient solution, which can help the eagle owl quickly regain its strength," said Zhou. The center released the eagle owl back into the world at the beginning of April.

## Caring for creatures

The eagle owl is one of 6,200 raptors the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center, regarded as the most professional organization of its type in China, has rescued since it was established in December 2001. Among other birds of prey rescued and treated at the center are falcons, eagles and vultures.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare in partnership with Beijing Normal University, founded the center to conduct wild animal rescues, habitat protection work, as well as help resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife.

Beijing lies along four important bird migratory routes for raptors, and also serves as a natural habitat for them.

As raptors are at the top of the food chain, they need a large population of species to sustain their existence, Zhou said. Their presence in a region is an indicator of good biodiversity and a healthy ecological environment, she said.

Raptors are carnivores and have two physical characteristics that distinguish them from other birds: beaks with a 90-degree curve, and very sharp and powerful claws.

"Only those that meet these two conditions are considered raptors," said Zhou, adding raptors have keen vision, sharp hearing as well as light and agile bodies.

There are five families and 99 species of raptors nationwide.

In Beijing, birds of prey from four families — *Accipitridae* (hawks and eagles), *Pandionidae* (ospreys), *Falconidae* (falcons), and *Strigidae* (owls) — and 50 species can be observed. Two new species of birds of prey, Brahminy kite and Black baza, have been added to the capital's bird classifications in the past two years, Zhou said.



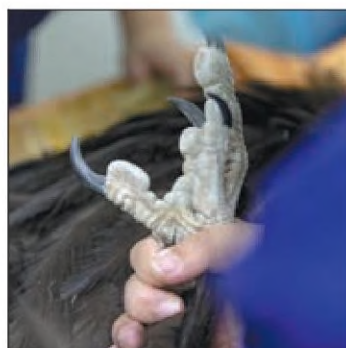
Zhou Lei (left), a rehabilitator from the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center, and Dai Chang, examine the wing of a vulture rescued in December. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Zhou gives medicine to a Northern eagle owl rescued on March 8.



The vulture rescued in December undergoes a physical examination under anesthesia on Jan 24.



The vulture's claws are examined during the physical assessment.



A rehabilitator feeds a baby raptor with a hand puppet.

Although raptors are at the top of the avian food chain, they are not immune to injury.

The raptors the center receives are often weak due to exhaustion during migration or lack of food in winter, Zhou said. Some have external injuries from collisions, net entanglements and sling-shot injuries. Others have been either poisoned or illegally traded, especially when they are chicks or juveniles. Raptor injuries also occur due to urban development and human activities.

The center's physical examination of injured raptors includes checking their weight and general condition, the integrity of their feathers, and whether there is any evidence of trauma, Zhou said.

They are sometimes X-rayed to determine if there is a fracture or any other injuries. Blood tests may also be conducted to check for inflammation and infection, and the bird may need to undergo an operation if necessary.

After receiving medical treatment at the center, the raptors need to remain there to make a gradual recovery, she added.

The aviary they are kept in simulates the raptors' natural environment. The ground is covered with stones and grass, and the swing-like perches help replicate swaying on tree branches.

The rehabilitation aviary is surrounded by wooden structures covered by two layers of mesh, obscuring the sight of humans and helping the birds to relax. Rehabilitators observe the raptors' recovery through the high-resolution cameras in the cages to avoid disturbing the raptors, Zhou said.

During the raptors' recovery, the therapists feed them whole mice and quails, food they would eat in a wild environment. Oriental scops owls and Oriental honey buzzards are fed mealworms and bee pupae.

## Close bonds

Zhou said a vulture rescued last year had left a deep impression on her.

A group of bird-watchers discovered the injured vulture on the ice of a river in Shahe, Changping district, on Dec 7, 2024. The raptor was in a poor condition with frostbitten talons.

After being taken to the center for a physical examination, an X-ray revealed the vulture had an internal fracture. The therapist decided the best treatment was to feed the bird to restore its strength, while limiting its activity area.

"By preventing it from having the opportunity to vigorously flap its wings, we allowed the bone to heal on its own and slowly recover," she said.

"After about two months, it had recovered very well. We then moved it from the small recovery enclosure to a much larger aviary to observe its flight ability," Zhou said.

The raptor rescue center has continuously added new equipment for better treatment and examination of the birds. Its first anesthesia ventilator, and a temperature-controlled surgical bed allow the

rehabilitators to perform physical examinations and surgeries.

Some raptor bones are as thin as toothpicks, and rehabilitators need to use fine surgical needles to reconnect bones. During surgery, the therapist's wrist must be steady, aligning the fractured ends of the bone before inserting the needle. "Bird bones are both hard and brittle, so we must control the pressure well," said Zhou.

After surgery, the raptors undergo regular physiotherapy while under respiratory anesthesia to help them move their joints. "Otherwise, even if the bone heals, the joint will be useless," she said.

**Zheng Zhishan**, manager of the Beijing Raptor Rescue Center

**Fledgling efforts**

Baby birds that have fallen from their nests are also treated at the center. Zheng, the center manager, said raptors develop imprinting behavior at one to four weeks after hatching.

"To prevent the fledglings from developing incorrect imprinting behavior toward their human caregivers, our rehabilitator wears a hat covered with gauze and some decorations to hide her face and holds a puppet in the shape of a bird of prey to use its simulated beak to feed the fledglings, just like in the wild," said Zheng.

She added that during the process of raising baby raptors, the rehabilitators avoid unnecessary contact with them. As the baby raptors grow, they learn naturally from each other, practicing flying and gradually mastering hunting skills by relying on their instincts.

"We actually try to keep our contact with the animal to a minimum during the rescue process, which means that we do not expect additional affection from the raptors," Zheng said.

"The purpose of a rescue is to release it back into the wild, so we try as much as possible to avoid interacting with them and things like that."

With increasing public ecological awareness, the number of rescued birds accidentally harmed by poison has decreased, from an annual average of 10 between 2002 and 2005, to fewer than three in the past five years, center data showed.

The decline coincides with new legislative measures to protect animals and their habitats in recent years, Zheng said.

In May 2023, the revised Law on the Protection of Wildlife went into effect. The law prohibits the use of poisons, explosives, electric-shock or electronic devices for hunting and trapping wild animals.

Local authorities have also strengthened their protection efforts.

In April 2020, Beijing's wild animal conservation regulation, banned the human consumption of all terrestrial wildlife and certain aquatic wild animals that are on the Beijing wildlife conservation list. Trading the listed animals was also forbidden in markets.

Anyone who is found artificially breeding wild animals faces a fine of 20,000 yuan to 100,000 yuan (\$3,074 to \$15,350), according to the regulation, which took effect on June 1, 2020.

The vulture stands in the sunlight on Feb 8, at Zhaitang, Mentougou district, Beijing, before returning to the wild.

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## TOP NEWS

# Nation opposes Washington's baseless smear

Repeated attempts have been made to shift blame over origin of the novel coronavirus

By LI MENGHAN  
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China reiterated its opposition on Wednesday to political manipulation of novel coronavirus origin tracing, condemning the United States for smearing China again with baseless accusations.

A National Health Commission spokesperson made the remarks in response to an article on tracing COVID-19 origins published on the White House website, which alleged that the novel coronavirus originated from a "lab leak" in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province.

Similar to the previous unfounded US allegations, the so-called rationale of the article completely lacks a scientific basis and the so-called "evidence" is entirely fabricated, the spokesperson said.

The US has repeatedly tried to shift blame and smear China over the origin of the novel coronavirus, fully exposing the sinister face of politicizing scientific issues. This approach has been derided by the scientific community, and the conspiracy to contain China through this approach will not succeed, the spokesperson added.

The spokesperson said that currently, an increasing number of clues and evidence point to the

novel coronavirus appearing earlier in the US, indicating that future tracing efforts should be carried out in the US.

The spokesperson urged the US to immediately cease smearing and attacking China, face its own issues, and offer a sincere and accountable explanation to the people of the world and the international community.

At a daily news conference on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun also emphasized that virus origin tracing is a serious scientific matter, criticizing the US for rehashing the "lab leak" theory as "another ploy of political manipulation under the guise of novel coronavirus origin tracing".

"China has actively supported and participated in global, science-based investigations into the origins of the novel coronavirus in the spirit of science, openness and transparency," Guo added.

"The US needs to stop politicizing and weaponizing origin-tracing at once, and stop scapegoating others. It should stop playing deaf to the questions concerning its role in the pandemic," he said, adding that the US still owes the international community a serious response to those legitimate concerns.

# Trade: Multilateralism at 'crucial crossroads'

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"The world, once again, finds itself at a crucial crossroads. Should we firmly advocate multilateralism, or should we allow unilateralism to spread unchecked? Should we promote democracy in international relations, or should we condone power politics? Should we abide by international law and the basic norms governing international relations, or should we return to the law of the jungle, where the strong prey on the weak?" said the ambassador.

"On these major issues concerning the fundamental interests of all countries and the future of humanity, the international community must make the right choice, make its unified voice heard, and take joint actions," Fu said.

"Economic globalization is the only way to human progress and an irresistible trend of the times. Erecting high walls of tariffs is turning back the wheel of history. The world will never and should never return to a state of mutual isolation and fragmentation," he said.

"All countries should jointly uphold the WTO-centered, rules-based multilateral trading system, build an open world economy, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, beneficial to all, and balanced," he added.

Fu said the world needs fairness and justice, "not putting one's own country first", and "development is the universal right of all countries, not the exclusive privilege of a few".

"The fruits of development should increasingly and more equitably benefit every country and every individual. The rich countries getting richer, while the poor countries remaining poor, is not acceptable," he said.

"For the Global South, and in particular, the least developed countries, the imposition of high tariffs is no different from depriving them of the right to development, creating deeper-seated development gaps," the ambassador said.

Members of the Global South and European countries on Wednesday also reiterated their concerns over tariffs and their

potential to destabilize the international economic system.

Samuel Moncada, permanent representative of Venezuela to the UN, speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations, expressed their deep concern over unilateral trade measures, including the use of tariffs, which may "constitute a new form of economic and political coercion".

"We all agree that trade wars do not have winners, and they can cause a world recession, further worsening the challenges we face. We underscore the fact that this situation will not lead to sustainable results and that commercial tensions may have a negative impact of great scope — such as exacerbating the global economic uncertainty — and may disproportionately impact developing countries," said Moncada.

"My country firmly believes that negotiated solutions foster trust, reduce friction and strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system. We therefore call for a recommitment to the principles of transparency, accountability and reciprocity in global trade relations," said Ioannis Stamatekos, deputy permanent representative of Greece to the UN.

"The expanded use of tariffs has significant negative effects on the global economy, raises prices for consumers and disrupts international supply chains. Rather, by lowering barriers and fostering open markets, innovation can flourish, poverty can be reduced, and consumers will have better choices at lower prices," said Troels Grabow Bay, political coordinator of the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN.

"The tariff measures are utterly unjustified by the economic claims of the US government. The tariffs target a trade deficit that is not the fault of China or its partners," said Jeffrey Sachs, professor of economics and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University. "It is the result of America's large budget deficits and low private savings. The United States is blaming other countries for its own economic policies."



## Celebrating unity

John Dramani Mahama, president of the Republic of Ghana (center), attends the launch of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Economic Community of West African States on Tuesday at the Accra International Conference Centre, Ghana. MISPER APAWU / AP PHOTO

# China ready to launch new space mission for crew shift

By ZHAO LEI  
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China is all set to launch its Shenzhou XX mission to make a crew shift onboard the nation's Tiangong space station, according to a senior program official.

A Long March 2F rocket carrying the spaceship will lift off at 5:17 pm on Thursday, said Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency, at a news conference held on Wednesday morning at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China.

Thursday also marks China's 10th Space Day, which is observed annually on April 24.

The Shenzhou XX vessel will carry mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong, Colonel Chen Zhongrui and Colonel Wang Jie, who are all members of the People's Liberation Army Astronaut Division, to the space station, which is currently manned by their Shenzhou XIX peers.

Lin said the Long March 2F rocket was being loaded with propellants at its service tower on Wednesday.

"After the Shenzhou XX spacecraft enters its preset orbital position, it will activate the rapid autonomous rendezvous-docking mode, and take about six-and-a-half hours to approach and connect with the front port of the Tianhe core module," he said.

The Shenzhou XX crew will conduct China's 15th manned spaceflight and become the ninth group of residents aboard the Tiangong, which is currently the only operational space station independently run by a single nation.

Chen Dong and his team will take over the expansive orbital outpost from the Shenzhou XIX crew — mission commander Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe, Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong and Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze — who arrived on Oct 30. As of Wednesday, Cai and his team have spent 175 days in orbit.

## Profile of the Shenzhou XX crew

**Senior Colonel Chen Dong**, 46, a native of Henan province, joined the People's Liberation Army Air Force in August 1997. He served as a squadron commander of a fighter jet regiment until May 2010, when he was recruited by the PLA Astronaut Division as one of the nation's second-generation astronauts.

In October 2016, Chen took part in the 33-day Shenzhou XI mission. In June 2022, he participated in the six-month Shenzhou XIV mission as crew commander. Chen is a recipient of the honorary title "Heroic Astronaut" and two Space Service Medals.

Chen, a first-grade astronaut, is commander of the PLA Astronaut Division. He is the mission commander of Shenzhou XX.

**Colonel Chen Zhongrui**, 40, a native of Henan province, joined the PLA Air Force in September 2003. He

was selected as one of the nation's third-generation astronauts in September 2020, after serving several years at a flight training brigade.

He is deputy commander of the PLA Astronaut Division and a fourth-grade astronaut.

**Colonel Wang Jie**, 35, a native of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, was recruited as one of the nation's third-generation astronauts in September 2020 and joined the PLA Astronaut Division in January 2021.

Before being recruited by the military, he was an engineer at the China Academy of Space Technology of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.

Wang has a doctoral degree from Beihang University in Beijing. He is now a fourth-grade astronaut.

ZHAO LEI

The two teams will stay together for approximately four days for transition work, after which the Shenzhou XIX astronauts will depart and return to Earth on Tuesday, according to Lin.

During their six-month orbital stay, the Shenzhou XX crew will perform various tasks such as conducting scientific experiments and technological demonstrations, performing spacewalks to install space debris shielding equipment, experimental instruments and other external devices, retrieving devices from outside the space station, and engaging in science lectures and other activities for public benefit.

This will mark the third space journey for Chen Dong, who participated in the Shenzhou XI mission in 2016 and the Shenzhou XIV mission in 2022, in which he served as the mission commander with Cai as

a crew member. For Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie, the upcoming spaceflight is their first extraterrestrial expedition.

Chen Zhongrui was a flight instructor at a PLA Air Force training base in Hebei province, before he was recruited by the PLA Astronaut Division. Wang Jie worked at the China Academy of Space Technology, a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, and took part in the research and development of a crucial technology to be used aboard the Tiangong.

Lin, the deputy director, said the members of the outgoing Shenzhou XIX crew have been in good condition, noting that they have conducted three spacewalks and their first was a new world record for the longest spacewalk. With a total of five spacewalks to his credit, Cai holds the record among Chinese

astronauts.

During their mission, Cai and his team completed 88 scientific and technological tasks, covering life science, the basic physics of micro-gravity, materials science, space medicine and new spacecraft technologies, Lin said.

In response to a question about the launch date and the 10th Space Day coinciding, the official said that mission planners chose the particular date and time because these are technically most favorable for the spaceflight.

Lin said that on behalf of the agency, he would like to pay tribute to all those who have contributed to China's space cause.

The Shenzhou XX mission will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regeneration of planarians, or flatworms, which are known for their extraordinary ability to regrow organs. These organisms can completely regrow their severed heads or tails, making them ideal candidates for the study of tissue regeneration mechanisms.

Lin said the experiments will deepen researchers' understanding of the basic mechanisms of regeneration at an individual level, and the results are expected to help address space-based health issues such as in-orbit injuries.

The experiments will use the small universal biological culture module at the space station's life and ecology experimental cabinet.

Different planarian segments will be studied as they initiate regeneration in orbit, with samples collected at critical intervals for fixation and imaging analysis, said Zhang Wei, director of the Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Previously, zebrafish and fruit flies have been carried by astronauts to the space station for research and experiments.

# Energy: Global response to climate change undermined

From page 1

As WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said, "We are increasing the risks to our lives, economies and the planet."

This is not just data — it is a deafening alarm bell. We should be responding with urgency.

The world had once looked to the United States to take up leadership as the largest historical emitter, the richest and most powerful nation with the greatest technological capabilities.

However, under both the first and now second Donald Trump administrations, the US has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement not once but twice — a stark signal of its retreat from global climate cooperation.

Fossil fuels are being championed once again as a tool to lower domestic energy costs and stimulate industrial production. And the US is retreating into nationalist energy policies that threaten not only its own leadership but planetary stability.

Climate leadership is not just about emissions — it's also about influence. The US once projected climate leadership through innovation, diplomacy and commitments.

After all, the US helped launch the Paris Agreement in 2015 — together

with China — and ratified it domestically in 2016. Furthermore, many US institutions, including academic bodies and think tanks, have led the world in decarbonization ideas, research and technologies.

Under the second Trump administration, fossil fuels have been reinstated as central to US energy policy. Funding for climate science research has been significantly reduced, leading to the termination of grants for clean energy projects and the dismissal of scientists from key agencies. Environmental regulations have been rolled back, and incentives for clean energy initiatives have been withdrawn. Concurrently, fossil fuels are being promoted as instruments of economic nationalism, echoing the "drill, baby, drill" mantra, with these combined policies framed as efforts to "make America great again".

This shift is not just domestic policy. It has global consequences. The climate torch-bearer now is China. The country leads the world in clean energy manufacturing, producing solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and batteries. It has invested heavily in green infrastructure, including green energy deployment, and is committed to achieving a carbon peak

before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060.

So, this is the new climate reality: The US, once the standard-bearer of global climate diplomacy, has stepped back; China is stepping up. The European Union — which emits about 8 percent of global emissions — may be said to lead on climate policy, but its efforts are insufficient on its own. The rest of the world is left navigating an unstable global climate order.

Meanwhile, the climate itself is accelerating. The WMO report details record-high ocean heat, rising sea levels and shrinking glaciers. In 2024, extreme weather events wreaked havoc across continents with extreme storms. Oceans are not only warming but also acidifying. Entire ecosystems are being thrown into imbalance.

The core goal of the Paris Agreement, to limit warming to 1.5 C, is slipping out of reach. According to the WMO, three scientific models estimate current warming between 1.34 C and 1.41 C. One more fossil-fueled growth cycle — as the US is embarking upon — could lock in overshoot conditions for decades. This happens when international trust is frayed and geopolitical competition intensifies.

We can no longer separate climate change from geopolitics.

Energy decisions are national security decisions. Technology competition shapes the contours of climate cooperation. The ability to deliver domestic resilience from extreme weather to clean infrastructure is now a measure of political legitimacy. Climate change has become a global stress test, not only for the environment but for governance, diplomacy and leadership itself.

The most alarming part? We have lost a clear global compass. I think cooperation is essential. Multilateralism is fragile. And the world's most significant historical emitter, the US, has lost credibility and seems unwilling to reclaim it.

The science could not be clearer, and the clock could not be ticking louder. What's missing is political will at the scale this moment demands.

The climate is changing fast, but our politics are changing faster. And if the planet is our shared home, we need leaders to mind the house.

The author is chief development strategist at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's Institute for the Environment. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

# Officials seek limited use of AI in judiciary

Participants of SCO event call for balanced approach in an era driven by technology

By CAO YIN in Hangzhou  
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Senior judges from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization called on Wednesday for deeper exchanges and cooperation in the use of artificial intelligence in the judicial field, emphasizing the need to balance innovation with legal and ethical safeguards.

The remarks were made during the 20th Meeting of Chief Justices of Supreme Courts of SCO Member States, held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Participants said courts in their home countries are already benefiting from AI, and they urged joint efforts to find a balanced approach that leverages the technology while safeguarding data security and staying within legal boundaries.

Deng Xiuming, executive vice-president of China's Supreme People's Court, said technological innovations such as big data and AI have been promoted and adopted across Chinese courts, contributing to high-quality judicial development.

He cited examples including an AI-powered copyright review system developed by the Supreme People's Court to address challenges in detecting duplicate patterns in copyright infringement cases. Courts in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, have created an AI-assisted system to support the trial process, including case filing, hearings and legal document drafting.

Despite the advantages, Deng stressed that AI should only play a supporting role in judicial work.

"Chinese courts will stay firmly committed to the principle that AI can only play a supporting role in judicial affairs and make sure that all the final decisions and responsibilities belong to human judges, thereby strictly upholding legal, ethical and

security boundaries," he said.

Justice Shahid Waheed of the Supreme Court of Pakistan proposed the development of a robust framework of ethical principles to guide AI's use in judicial settings.

"It's crucial to remain vigilant to the ethical, legal and societal implications of AI in the courtroom," Waheed said.

He emphasized the need for courts to disclose when assistance from AI is taken in decision-making, ensuring litigants are informed. He also called for strong protections of sensitive litigant data through strict adherence to privacy laws and cybersecurity protocols.

India's Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna echoed the call for data protection and recommended regular updates for AI systems due to the technology's rapid evolution. He also stressed the importance of legal education in preparing practitioners to use AI wisely.

"Our profession's future hinges on knowing when technology serves us best and when human judgment prevails," Khanna said.

"This demands institutional investment in specialized curricula, continuing education and practical frameworks for the intelligent, ethical application of AI in legal practice."

Mohammad Kazemifard, head of the Center for Statistics, Information and Technology of Iran, described AI as an opportunity and said Iran welcomes stronger cooperation with other member states in the use of new technologies and smart judicial services.

He proposed the creation of a dedicated AI committee to address issues such as defining the boundaries of AI's role in judicial decision-making and harmonizing standards for judicial data protection.

"AI becomes a tool for inclusive and equitable justice — never a threat," Kazemifard said.



Workers move giant panda Lan Yun at China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Dujiangyan, Sichuan province, on Tuesday night before the panda boarded a flight with another one, He Feng, to Austria on Wednesday. HE HAIYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Pandas leave for new abode in Austria

By HOU LIQIANG  
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Two giant pandas, He Feng and Lan Yun, departed from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, on Wednesday for Austria, where they will spend the next 10 years at the historic Schoenbrunn Zoo in Vienna.

Both born in 2020, the pandas are from the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda.

To ensure a smooth and safe journey, a Chinese veterinarian and an Austrian caregiver accompanied them on the flight, according to a media release from the center.

Fresh bamboo, bamboo shoots, specially made steamed buns, drinking water and medications were also packed for the trip, the release said.

A Chinese caregiver and veteri-

narian will remain with the pandas for a period to help them adapt to their new environment at Schoenbrunn Zoo, one of the world's oldest zoos with a history of more than 270 years.

He Feng, the male panda, has a name symbolizing lotus-infused freshness, while Lan Yun, the female, is named to reflect the fragrance of orchids, the center said.

The release outlined a range of preparations jointly undertaken by China and Austria ahead of the pandas' arrival.

In March, a team of Chinese experts visited Austria to inspect the upgraded facilities at the zoo and provided technical guidance on aspects such as habitat, diet and health care.

The renovated indoor enclosure features new climbing structures and an advanced system for controlling temperature and humidity. The outdoor space includes tall

trees, shrubs, wooden perches, rock formations, caves, a pond and a creek with automatically filtered water.

A bamboo plantation has also been established to provide a stable and sufficient food supply for the pandas, according to the release.

China and Austria began official collaboration on giant panda conservation and research in 2003. The partnership has yielded achievements in panda breeding, protection and disease treatment, as well as technical exchanges, personnel training and public education.

As a highlight of the collaboration, pandas Yang Yang and Long Hui, who lived at Schoenbrunn Zoo from 2003, successfully produced five cubs through natural mating — a record for panda breeding in Europe, the center noted.

## SAR astronauts gear up for debut mission

By ZHAO LEI  
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Chinese astronauts selected from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions are expected to carry out their first spaceflight as early as 2026, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency, said at a news conference at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China that the two astronauts have adapted well to life and training at the Astronaut Center of China in Beijing since arriving in August.

"They have been getting along well with other astronauts and training diligently and hard," Lin said. "They are learning knowledge and skills to be used in space missions. As science payload specialists, one of them will take part in their first mission as early as 2026."

It was the first time a space official confirmed a flight timeline for the astronauts from Hong Kong

and Macao, who are part of China's fourth group of astronauts.

China began selecting its fourth generation of astronauts in October 2022 and announced the completion of the process in June last year. Ten astronauts were chosen: eight spacecraft pilots and two science payload specialists.

Both of the payload specialists were selected from Hong Kong and Macao, marking the first time residents from the two regions have joined China's astronaut team.

Lin said the fourth-generation astronauts have been training in Beijing since August, receiving lectures on spaceflight and psychological resilience, along with specially designed physical training.

They have also observed the launches, returns and spacewalks of earlier astronaut crews.

In addition to standard courses, the Hong Kong and Macao astronauts have received tailored lectures, including sessions on the history and spirit of China's

manned space program and lessons in spoken Mandarin, Lin said in October.

Separately, Lin said the selection of two Pakistani astronauts is underway. After the process is completed, the candidates will begin professional training in China.

One of the selected Pakistani astronauts will eventually fly to China's Tiangong space station and work there as a science payload specialist, he said.

The China Manned Space Agency and Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission signed an agreement in February in Islamabad to facilitate bilateral cooperation in astronaut selection, training and future joint missions aboard the Tiangong station.

Lin added that several other countries have also approached China about sending their nationals to participate in missions on the Tiangong station, and discussions on such collaborations are ongoing.

## Sky is the limit



Adventurous tourists scale the newly opened 300-meter-long "Sky Ladder" at Shiniuzhai geological park in Pingjiang, Hunan province, on Wednesday. The cliff climbing project, with a vertical height of 260 meters, allows visitors to traverse the cliff along steel cables, experiencing both thrill and beauty, with a capacity of 30 climbers at a time. YANG HUAFENG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Digital reading, publishing gain momentum in nation

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan  
and ZHAO RUINAN

The number of digital readers in China reached 670 million last year, marking a 17.52 percent year-on-year increase, according to a report released on Wednesday at the Fourth National Conference on Reading in Taiyuan, Shanxi province.

"The growth of digital readers can be attributed to the rapid increase in users closely related to the intellectual property derivatives and peripheral services within the online literature industry," said Zhang Yijun, first vice-chairman of the China Audio-video and Digital Publishing Association, at the conference.

Over the past five years, China has added 176 million digital readers, representing a growth rate of 35.63 percent, Zhang said. He added that digital reading is becoming a prima-

ry means for internet users in the country to acquire knowledge and inspiration in daily life.

According to the 2024 China Digital Reading Report, the total number of digital reading material in China reached approximately 63 billion, a 6.31 percent increase over the previous year.

Among those works, online literature and e-books accounted for about 67.55 percent, while audio content made up the remaining 32.45 percent.

The overall revenue of China's reading market reached 66 billion yuan (\$9.05 billion) last year, up 16 percent from the previous year, the report said.

It also highlighted strong growth in three key sectors of the digital publishing industry last year: mass reading, audio reading and academic reading. They generated revenues of more than 48.8 billion yuan, 12.4

billion yuan and 4.9 billion yuan, respectively.

Xu Jiahui, a 22-year-old postgraduate student in Shanxi, said he prefers e-reading for lighter content such as novels. For more challenging material like classics, he turns to print books.

The total number of Chinese digital reading materials that went global last year, including translations, overseas originals and e-books, reached 808,400, a 6 percent increase year-on-year.

Southeast Asia remained the top overseas market for Chinese digital reading for the second year in a row, surpassing North America, according to the report.

"In my country, you can see many books about China. Some introduce Chinese culture, such as tea culture, Spring Festival and traditional clothing, while others discuss Chinese his-

tory or economic development," said Ta Ngoc Huyen, a Vietnamese international student in China.

"I've seen books like *General History of China* in the library before, as well as Chinese textbooks for foreigners learning the language."

Cai Yanqing, an official at the Shanxi Provincial Library, said a diverse range of digital resources is now available to meet the needs of different readers. Audiobooks, for example, help elderly readers access content, while other resources are tailored to the visually impaired.

"Transcending time and space limitations, digital reading is becoming increasingly popular among various reader demographics," Cai said.

Yu Hang, chairman of China Mobile's digital content unit Migu, said online literature, web dramas and online games have become the new trio of digital content for cultur-



Readers use electronic devices for learning at the Shanxi Provincial Library in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on Wednesday, during the 30th World Book and Copyright Day. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

al export, continuing to expand in overseas markets.

"AI technology has injected new momentum into various industries, accelerating the transformation and upgrading of the digital reading sec-

### Briefly

#### Former vice-governor removed from office

Zhao Jinyun, former vice-governor of Gansu province, has been dismissed from public office due to serious violations of duty, according to China's top anti-corruption bodies on Wednesday. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission announced in a release that, with the approval of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the NSC conducted an investigation into Zhao's serious violations of duty. The investigation found that Zhao engaged in a series of illegal activities, including accepting banquets that could hinder the impartial exercise of power, failing to truly report personal matters, seeking benefits for others in the selection and appointment of officials, and accepting gifts and money. Additionally, she engaged in profit-making activities in violation of regulations and used her position to seek benefits for others in project contracting and fund allocation, illegally accepting large sums of money and gifts.

#### 920 fraud suspects handed over to China

More than 920 Chinese nationals suspected of involvement in telecommunications and cyberspace fraud were recently handed over to Chinese authorities by Myanmar, China's Ministry of Public Security said on Wednesday. The suspects were apprehended in southern Shan state during a series of operations launched by Myanmar authorities starting March 24, the ministry said in a statement. A large number of items allegedly used in the scams — including computers, cell-phones, bank cards and prewritten scripts — were also seized during the crackdowns, according to the statement. The suspects were transferred to Chinese custody at Daluo Port in Xishuangbanna, in the southwestern province of Yunnan. Joint efforts between China and Myanmar to combat telecom and online fraud have resulted in the arrest of more than 55,000 Chinese suspects and the dismantling of numerous fraud syndicates operating in northern Myanmar, the ministry said.

#### Forum launches maritime initiative

Aiming to contribute Chinese wisdom on global maritime development, governance, cooperation and security, the Shanghai Forum for a Maritime Community with a Shared Future, themed "Win-Win Blue Future: China's Solution and the Global Vision", was held on Wednesday at Shanghai Maritime University. A special initiative was also launched at the forum to enhance the construction of a maritime community with a shared future, highlighting building maritime cities, fostering new quality productive maritime forces, improving maritime rules and regulation making, promoting coordinated maritime cooperation and safeguarding maritime security.

CHINA DAILY

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## WORLD



A vehicle is destroyed after a Russian drone attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. The attacks left nine people injured. ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

## London talks on Ukraine crisis downgraded as Rubio pulls out

Kremlin: Parties in peace discussions need to narrow down their differences

LONDON/PARIS — Talks among US, Ukrainian and European officials on ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict faltered on Wednesday as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio abruptly canceled his trip to London, downgrading the negotiations.

Rubio's no-show prompted a broader meeting of foreign ministers from Ukraine, the United Kingdom, France and Germany to be canceled, though talks continued at a lower level. The United States would now be represented by Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg.

The downgrading of the talks came at a critical time, just days after US President Donald Trump warned that Washington could walk away if there was no progress on a deal soon.

A source close to the discussions said the downgrading of the meeting came after Ukraine drafted a paper for the Europeans on Tuesday in which it said there would be no discussions on territorial issues until "a full and unconditional ceasefire".

The source said the apparent US

nervousness could indicate that the Ukrainian position did not align with what Washington's representatives had agreed so far with the Russians.

US Vice-President JD Vance, during a visit on Wednesday to Agra, India, told reporters, "We've issued a very explicit proposal to both the Russians and the Ukrainians, and it's time for them to either say yes or for the United States to walk away from this process."

He said it was "a very fair proposal" that would "freeze the territorial lines at some level close to where they are today", with both sides having to give up some territory they currently hold. He did not provide further details of the proposal.

Vance's comments came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky ruled out ceding territory to Russia as part of any potential peace agreement, calling it a nonstarter.

The London meeting is a follow-up to a similar session in Paris last week where US, Ukrainian and

European officials discussed ways to move forward and narrow down differences.

During those talks, Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff presented a paper to the participants outlining proposals in which Ukraine in particular, but also Russia, would need to make concessions, according to three diplomats aware of the talks.

Witkoff is to visit Moscow this week, the White House has confirmed, in what would be his fourth trip to Russia since Trump took office.

### 'Fake' reports

According to the Financial Times, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Witkoff he was prepared to halt the military operation and freeze the current front line if Russia's sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula was recognized.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded on Wednesday by saying that "a lot of fakes are being published at the moment", according to the RIA Novosti state news agency.

The London talks were aimed at working to bridge differences and

find areas that could satisfy Moscow and open a serious negotiation, diplomats said.

Beyond Crimea, other major sticking points remain, including Russia's push for lifting of European Union sanctions against it before negotiations are finished — which Europe staunchly opposes, diplomats said.

The Kremlin said on Wednesday that countries involved in peace talks around Ukraine still needed to narrow down their differences and that there were "a lot of nuances" that needed to be worked out before any deal could be reached.

"We are also continuing our contacts ... but of course there are many nuances around the settlement that need to be worked out, where positions need to be brought closer together and so on. This work is ongoing," Peskov told reporters.

He said Russia was continuing to talk to the US about a possible settlement, but was not in contact with Europe or Ukraine on the subject. However, Putin remained open to talks with all parties, he added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Chinese firm boosting Nairobi River project

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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George Nyakundi, a bus driver in Kenya's capital Nairobi, spent almost 10 years living along the banks of the Nairobi River in Kamukunji slum — until devastating floods in April last year forced him to abandon his home.

Despite repeated warnings from government officials about the dangers of settling near the river, Nyakundi said many residents chose to stay because of the low rent.

"We all knew that living in the area was not safe because of persistent insecurity, poor sanitation and lack of basic infrastructure, but none of us expected the floods that came," Nyakundi said.

"Our houses were not swept away, but we lost a lot of property as the floodwaters stayed inside for almost a week."

Now, relief may be on the horizon for riverbank residents like Nyakundi. The Kenyan government has stepped up reclamation efforts to restore the Nairobi River and improve the city's broader environment.

Joseph Muracia, chief executive of the Nairobi Rivers Commission, said the long-running reclamation efforts recently received a boost through a \$388 million partnership with Chinese company Energy China. The project aims to not only rehabilitate the Nairobi River but also build 50,000 affordable houses in the reclaimed areas for slum dwellers like Nyakundi.

It also includes the construction of a 60-kilometer sewer line, wastewater treatment plants, protection of upstream water sources, river dredging, stormwater management, solid waste treatment, landscaping, and the beautification of the river's surroundings, Muracia said.

Launched last month by Presi-

dent William Ruto, the initiative will also facilitate the resettlement of flood victims affected by years of encroachment along the river.

Muracia said the project will expand to four counties surrounding the capital. It seeks to revitalize Nairobi's rivers into vibrant urban waterfronts, integrating social housing projects, pedestrian walkways, cycle lanes, a new trunk sewer line, pedestrian bridges, and flower-lined riverbanks.

Through the partnership with Energy China, he said, they are looking forward to employing the latest technology to ensure the river reclamation is not only effective but also sustainable.

### Local workforce

Li Cheng, a project manager at Energy China, said the river reclamation effort will incorporate cutting-edge technology and rely heavily on local labor — especially from communities living along the river basin.

"We will leverage advanced technologies and mobilize a local workforce to accelerate the river's restoration," Li told Xinhua News Agency. "The rehabilitation of the Nairobi River is expected to take two years, with riparian communities set to benefit from substantial environmental improvements upon completion."

Muracia said the project is expected to create nearly 20,000 jobs while reversing decades of environmental degradation and pollution, which mainly affects riverbank residents through communicable diseases and other health complications.

"Public participation is instrumental in implementing the project," he said. "Locals will earn a living from it and we want to entice the public to own the protection of the river by participating in river cleanups, river walks, tree planting and educational campaigns long after the reclamation is done."

## Trouble brewing as German beer exports hit 10-year low

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
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Germany's beer exports are down 6 percent from levels registered 10 years ago, according to the Federal Statistical Office, or Destatis, highlighting broader challenges in the country's brewing sector.

The decline in exports parallels an even more pronounced shift in domestic consumption, with people in Germany drinking 15.1 percent less beer than they did a decade ago, a trend that suggests significant changes in the nation's traditional beer market.

The statistics, published ahead of German Beer Day on Wednesday, paint a picture of an industry confronting changing consumer preferences and market dynamics.

According to Destatis, German breweries exported 1.45 billion liters of beer last year, down from 1.54 billion liters in 2014. The majority of these exports, or 55.7 percent, were destined for European Union member states, while the remaining 44.3 percent reached markets beyond the bloc.

The domestic market shows an even steeper decline, with local sales dropping to 6.8 billion liters last

year from 8 billion liters a decade earlier. Despite the overall downturn, exports now constitute a larger share of total sales at 17.6 percent, marking a 1.5 percentage point increase from 2014.

The figures do not include non-alcoholic beer and beer imported from outside the EU. The combined total of domestic sales and exports fell to less than 8.3 billion liters last year, marking a decrease from 8.4 billion liters the previous year.

While Destatis did not specify causes for the declining demand, the trend aligns with broader shifts in consumer behavior across many countries, where health consciousness appears to be reshaping drinking habits, Deutsche Welle News reported.

Notably, as traditional beer sales fall, Germany has witnessed a significant surge in nonalcoholic beer consumption, indicating evolving consumer preferences rather than a wholesale rejection of beer culture, Deutsche Welle said.

An aging population increasingly favors healthier, nonalcoholic alternatives, while rising energy costs has forced some breweries to close doors. The Munich Eye newspaper reported.

## China helps Cuba fight blackouts, strengthen power grid

By JIMENA ESTEBAN  
in Buenos Aires, Argentina  
For China Daily

Cuba may slowly ease its crippling blackouts and strengthen the electricity grid as it begins building seven solar parks with the first batch of equipment from China.

The Chinese aid helps Cuba's plan to build 92 solar installations by 2028, adding about 2,000 megawatts to the island's power grid and help reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports. Once completed, the project would significantly boost Cuba's strained power system, which currently has a capacity of 7,264 MW.

Installation work is set to begin soon in Artemisa, about 50 kilometers west of Havana, where the equipment arrived late last month. Additional solar parks are planned for the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Las Tunas, Holguin, Granma and Guantanamo. More materials from China are expected in the coming months.

"Chinese investment in solar energy in Cuba is a joint commitment to energy sovereignty, South-South cooperation, and the multipolar reconfiguration of global trade and logistics," said Maribel Aponte-Garcia, an economist and professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus.

The solar parks will also contribute to Cuba's logistical and financial sovereignty by strengthening the country's logistics capacity in the Greater Caribbean, she said.



Chinese Ambassador to Cuba Hua Xin (front) inspects solar panel equipment from China in Guanajay, Artemisa Province, Cuba, on March 14. JOAQUIN HERNANDEZ / XINHUA

For example, the Port of Mariel has the potential to be connected into logistics corridors in the China-Russia-Latin America axis, which can help avoid United States-controlled transit points such as the Panama Canal.

"Cuba is much more than an island with an energy crisis," Aponte-Garcia said. "It's a critical logistics node in the Greater Caribbean, with direct access to maritime routes that connect the Atlantic with the Gulf of Mexico, Central America and South America."

Over time, the solar park could become a key component of an emerging South-South architecture, in which renewable energy powers technological platforms, ports and autonomous corridors, she added.

China, a major global exporter of solar panels, has emerged as a "comrade and brother" to Cuba, reaffirming its commitment to supporting the island's energy transition, said Ruvisei Gonzalez Saez, a professor at Cuba's Center of Research for International Policy.

Last year, China exported enough solar panels globally to generate 235.93 gigawatts of power, up 13 percent year-on-year, according to US renewables research firm InfoLink Consulting.

Gonzalez emphasized the significance of Chinese cooperation in advancing Cuba's renewable energy sector.

"Chinese cooperation in installing solar parks is extremely strategic, particularly in the energy sector," he

said, adding the effects are not only political and economic but also show how it can improve the quality of life for Cubans.

Aponte-Garcia said China has long been an active partner of Cuba in terms of trade and investment, with participation in projects such as the Mariel Special Development Zone and the energy sector.

In 2018, Cuba formally joined the Belt and Road Initiative, and three years later it joined the Belt and Road Energy Partnership, which aims to boost multinational energy cooperation.

Beijing and Havana have signed several construction and energy deals aimed at supporting cooperation between China and Latin America.

Beyond energy coordination, China also continues to invest in projects linked to the production of medicines, biotechnology and agriculture, Gonzalez said.

Cuba joined the BRICS+ grouping as a partner state, which could drive integration with the bloc. BRICS+ is an intergovernmental organization that includes Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa, along with a growing number of countries such as the United Arab Emirates.

Further, an increased presence of Chinese investments in Cuba is expected, though the US blockade against Cuba "can make some economic-financial operations and processes difficult", Gonzalez said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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# WORLD



Paramedics wheel in an injured tourist to a hospital in India-controlled Kashmir on Tuesday. WASEEM ANDRABI VIA GETTY IMAGES

## 26 tourists killed in deadly 'terror attack'

PM Modi vows action as he condemns incident in India-controlled Kashmir

NEW DELHI — At least 26 tourists were killed and several others wounded on Tuesday after unknown gunmen fired at them in the restive India-controlled Kashmir, police said.

The attack took place in Pahalgam town, about 89 kilometers east of Srinagar city, the summer capital of the India-controlled Kashmir, police said.

The ambush was one of the deadliest attacks in the valley in recent years, the New Delhi-based news portal, The Print, quoted its sources in India's defense and security establishment as saying.

Police officers said gunmen opened fire at tourists from a point-blank range at Baisaran meadow.

Immediately after the incident, a police team rushed to the spot, along with army and paramilitary forces, to evacuate the wounded tourists and recover the bodies.

The injured were first brought to a government hospital in Pahalgam and then referred to Anantnag and Srinagar for further treatment.

The nationalities of the victims were not immediately known.

All the key leaders of the government have condemned the attack and condoled the loss of lives.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was currently on an official visit to Saudi Arabia, has strongly condemned the attack.

"I strongly condemn the terror attack. ... Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest," Modi said in a statement.

He vowed to bring those behind this heinous act to justice, saying their evil agenda will never succeed.

According to the Times of India, The Resistance Front has claimed responsibility for the attack.

### Tributes paid

On Wednesday, India's Home Minister Amit Shah attended a ceremony at a police control room in Srinagar, where the slain tourists were paid floral tributes. He also met the families of several victims. Shah vowed to "come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences."

The region's incumbent Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also condemned the attack and expressed sympathies to the families of the deceased in the deadly incident.

Police called it a "terror attack" and blamed those militants.

China "strongly condemns" the attack in the region, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

"China firmly opposes terrorism of any form, and we express our condolences to the victims and our sincere sympathies to their families and the injured," Guo said at a regular news conference in Beijing on Wednesday.

Tens of thousands of armed police and soldiers fanned out across the region and erected additional checkpoints. They searched cars and in some areas summoned former militants to police stations for questioning, reports said.

Pahalgam is a famous tourist destination. It is home to the roaring Lidder River, pine forests and lush green meadows, which attract thousands of tourists every year during summer.

Last June, militants attacked a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims in the region's Reasi district. The bus skidded off the road and fell into a gorge, killing nine and wounding 33 others.

A guerrilla war has been going on between militants and Indian troops stationed in the region since 1989.

Zhang Yunbi in Beijing contributed to this story.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## Opposition to displacement of Gaza residents grows amid Israeli strikes

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
jan@chinadailyapac.com

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, at the opening of the 32nd session of the Palestinian Central Council in Ramallah, West Bank, on Wednesday, stressed his state's rejection of Israel's attempts to uproot Gaza Strip residents from their homes on the first day of the two-day meeting.

Abbas insisted that Gaza Strip is an inseparable part of Palestine and went ahead in describing the tragic event as a "new Nakba", referring to the mass displacement of some 700,000 Palestinians in Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

Abbas also slammed Israel for "besieging our people financially by stealing Palestinian clearance revenues, which have so far exceeded \$2 billion", and seizing citizens' lands. Abbas had also called on Hamas to cooperate with the efforts to stop the Palestinian bloodshed, and refrain from giving Israel any new pretext to continue its aggression.

Also at the meeting, Abbas emphasized the need for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, an end to attacks in the West Bank, and the need to secure further international recognition of the State of Palestine and to obtain full membership in the United Nations.

At least 147 out of 193 UN-member states, representing 75 percent of the international community, recognize Palestine. But this is changing, with French President Emmanuel Macron recently saying France could recognize Palestine in June while Japan had announced it was reconsidering last year.

The committee said the world, especially the UN Security Council, must assume its responsibilities and compel Israel to halt its "war of extermination in the Gaza Strip" and the "dangerous attacks launched by the occupation forces

and terrorist settlers in the West Bank".

The PLO meeting is also scheduled to establish a vice-presidential position for the first time in its history while discussing ways to end the crisis in the Gaza Strip, Wafa News Agency reported.

### Internal decision

Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, was quoted as saying by Xinhua News Agency that the new position was a purely internal decision aimed at addressing functional needs within the organization and not a response to foreign pressure. The candidate must be a current member of the PLO Executive Committee.

Meanwhile, mediators are working on a proposal to end the Israel-Hamas conflict that would include a five- to seven-year truce and the release of all remaining

hostages, officials said on Wednesday. An Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City killed 23 people, according to local health authorities.

There was no immediate Israeli comment on the strike. France, Germany and Britain meanwhile said Israel's seven-week-old blockade on all imports to Gaza, including food, was "intolerable", in unusually strong criticism from three of the country's closest allies.

Egypt and Qatar are still developing the proposal, which would include the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the entire Strip and the release of Palestinian prisoners, according to an Egyptian official and a Hamas official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Agencies contributed to this story.



A girl looks at Palestinians inspecting the area among the rubble of destroyed buildings following the Israeli attack in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. ABED RAHIM KHATIB/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

### Briefly

#### CHINA Wang Yi to visit Kazakhstan, Brazil

From Friday to April 30, Foreign Minister Wang Yi will undertake a trip to Kazakhstan and Brazil. He will attend a series of meetings to shore up multilateralism, world peace and security, the Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday. In Kazakhstan, Wang will attend the Sixth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting in preparation for the second China-Central Asia Summit. He will also hold the Second China-Kazakhstan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue. Then in Brazil, Wang will attend the Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs / International Relations and the 15th Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisers and High Representatives on National Security.

#### IRAN Teheran slams US sanctions before talks

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday condemned the latest US sanctions targeting its oil network, calling the move a sign of a "hostile approach" ahead of a third round of nuclear talks. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the policy of imposing sanctions was a "contradiction with the US demand for dialogue".

CHINA DAILY—AGENCIES

## Houthis claim fresh strikes against US aircraft carriers

SANAA — Yemen's Houthi said in a statement on Tuesday that the group launched fresh attacks against two US aircraft carriers, and had shot down a US MQ-9 drone over the Yemeni northwestern province of Hajjah.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said in a televised statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV that the group launched fresh attacks against two US aircraft carriers, from which the US military has been conducting airstrikes against Houthi targets across northern Yemen since mid-March.

"We carried out two military operations targeting the American aircraft carriers: the USS *Harry S. Truman* and USS *Carl Vinson* and their escorting warships in the Red and Arabian Seas, using cruise missiles and drones," Sarea said.

"We shot down a hostile American MQ-9 drone while carrying out hostile missions in the airspace of Hajjah Province," Sarea said.

"The drone was shot down, using a locally manufactured surface-to-air missile," he said, adding: "The MQ-9 drone is the seventh drone we had shot down this April and the 22nd since November 2023."

The Houthi military spokesman stressed that the group is ready to confront the US military escalation of airstrikes.

"We will continue to deal responsibly and appropriately with any developments in the coming days at all levels," he said, noting, "We will not stop supporting Palestinians until the Israeli aggression on Gaza stops and the blockade on it is lifted."

Since the conflict in Gaza broke out in October 2023, the Houthis have repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel in what they say is a show of solidarity with the Palestinians.

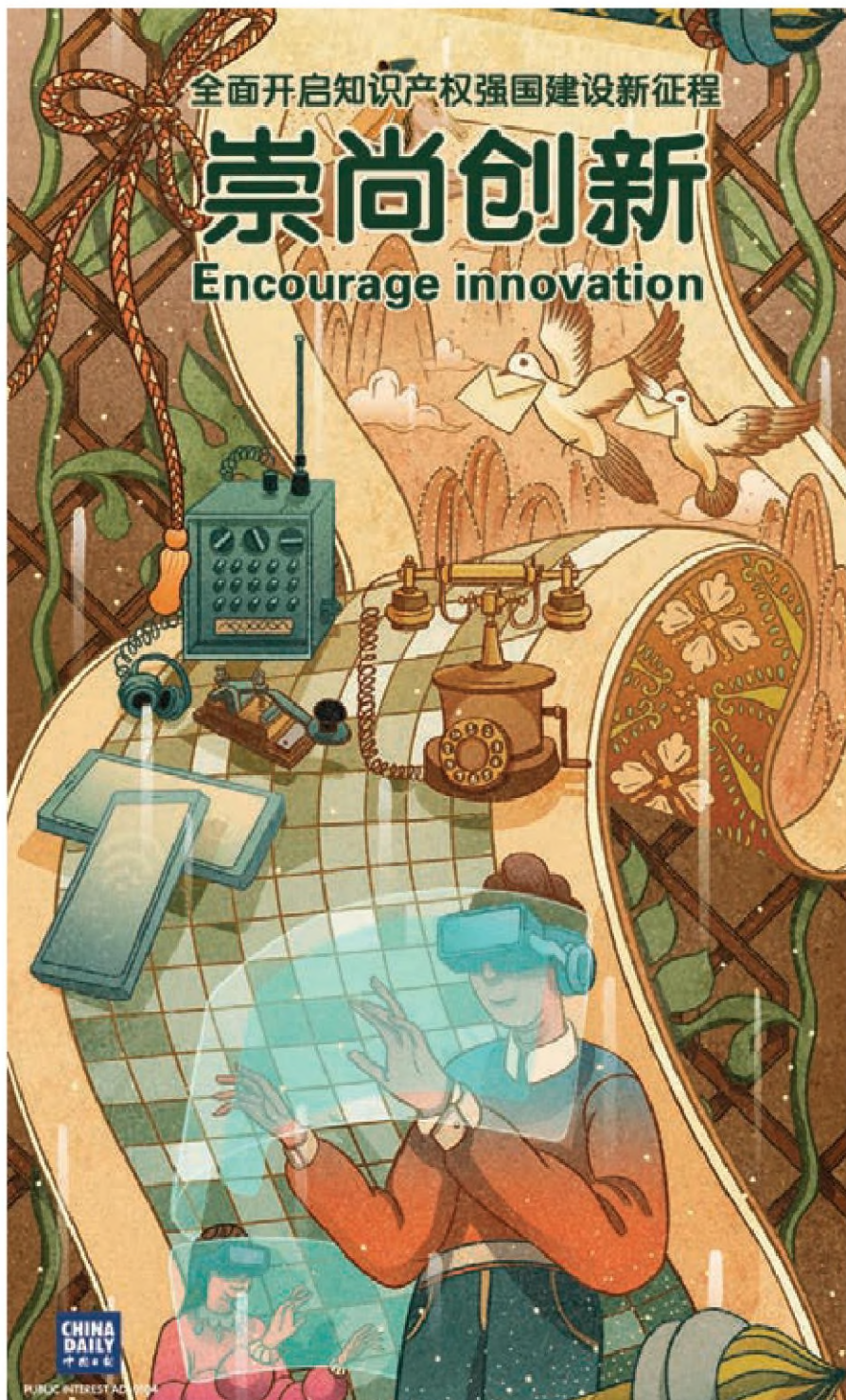
Early on Tuesday, al-Masirah TV reported dozens of US airstrikes on several locations across northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa. No casualties were reported as the Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, rarely disclose their losses.

Tensions between the Houthi group and the US military have escalated since Washington resumed airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen on March 15 to deter the group from targeting Israel and US warships.

Meanwhile, Israel's military said on Wednesday that a missile was "launched from Yemen".

Houthis have targeted ships it accuses of having ties to Israel as the freighters travel on the Red Sea, a vital waterway for global trade.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



## ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

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



Passu glacier in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region in 2022. Himalayan glaciers providing critical water to nearly 2 billion people are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters. ABDUL MAJEED / AFP

## RECEDING COVER

Snowfall in Himalayan ranges reaches 23-year low, threatening 2 billion people

Snowfall in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range has reached a 23-year low, threatening nearly 2 billion people dependent on snowmelt for water, scientists warned in a report on Monday.

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range, which stretches from Afghanistan to Myanmar, holds the largest reserves of ice and snow outside the Arctic and Antarctica and is a vital source of fresh water for about 2 billion people.

Researchers said there was "a significant decline in seasonal snow across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, with snow persistence (the time snow remains on the ground) 23.6 percent below normal — the lowest in 23 years", the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD, said.

"This trend, now in its third consecutive year, threatens water security for nearly 2 billion people," it said in its Snow Update Report.

The intergovernmental ICIMOD's member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

The study also warned of "potential lower river flows, increased groundwater reliance and heightened drought risk".

Sher Muhammad, lead author of the ICIMOD report, said that "this year the snowfall started late in January and remained low in the winter season on average".

Several countries in the region have already issued drought warnings, with upcoming harvests and access to water at risk for populations already facing longer, hotter, and more frequent heat waves.

The report urged countries that rely on the 12 major river basins in the region to develop "improved water management, stronger drought preparedness, better early



Men point at the black Shisper glacier in the Karakoram mountain range of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region in 2019. AAMIR QURESHI / AFP

warning systems and greater regional cooperation".

The Mekong (named Lancang in China) and Salween basins — the two longest rivers in Southeast Asia supplying water to China and Myanmar — had lost about half of their snow cover, it said.

Pema Gyamtsho, ICIMOD's director general, called for changes in policy to deal with the low snow levels in the long term.

"Carbon emissions have already locked in an irreversible course of recurrent snow anomalies in the HKH (Hindu Kush-Himalayan region)," Gyamtsho said.

#### Temperature rise

Asia is the region most affected by climate-related disasters, according to the UN's World Meteorological Organization, which reported in March that glaciers have retreated by record levels in five of the past six years.

Climate scientists say the Earth's

temperature has increased by an average of 0.74 C over the past 100 years, but warming across the Himalayas has been greater than the global averages.

Snow cover atop Qomolangma, known as Mount Everest in the West, retreated by 150 meters, indicating a lack of snow accumulation during the winter season of 2024-25, researchers say.

Analyzing NASA satellite images from October 2023 to early January this year, trends illustrated "a rise in snow line through January in both 2024 and 2025", Mauri Peltó, a professor of environmental science at Nichols College in Dudley, Massachusetts wrote in a blog post on Feb 2.

At 8,849 meters above sea level, Qomolangma is the tallest point on Earth. It is located between Nepal and China's Xizang autonomous region.

"Snow line" refers to the boundary or elevation at which snow per-

manently stays on a mountain. A rising snow line — in which snow melts at lower heights, forcing the snow line boundary up a mountain-side — is suggestive of a warming climate.

Peltó said that warmer and drier conditions have been prevailing in recent winters, including those of 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025, which are driving reduced snow cover, higher snow lines and increased forest fires.

While the region saw a few small snow events early in each winter, the snow cover does not persist, suggesting that glaciers have continued to retreat even above 6,000 meters on Qomolangma, he said.

In December, Nepal saw 20 to 25 percent of normal with drier conditions in the east, accompanied by above average temperatures. This resulted in extreme drought in several provinces, including Koshi Province, Peltó said.

He observed that this January has continued to be dry, with consistently warm conditions, thereby enabling high snow lines to persist and rise from early December into early February.

"The average snow line (on Qomolangma region glaciers on Jan 28) is 6,100 meters — 150 meters higher than on Dec 11," Peltó said.

Reuters quoted Kenton Cool, a British climber, as saying, "Qomolangma is losing snow and turning dry and rocky".

Cool, who climbed the peak for the first time in 2004, said the giant mountain appears to be drying now.

"If you go back to the early mid-2000s there used to be a lot of snow," he said. "A general trend of the mountain is to be more rocky and less snow."

THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH & DAWN, PAKISTAN

## Singapore downgrades 2025 GDP forecast amid tariffs

Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry has cut the country's growth forecast for 2025 to zero percent to 2 percent in the face of US tariffs, with some economists warning of a possible technical recession this year.

The ministry's new forecast announced on April 14 is a downgrade from the 1 percent to 3 percent range previously.

Singapore's economy grew 4.4 percent last year.

Also on April 14, the Monetary Authority of Singapore further reduced the pace of the local currency's trade-weighted appreciation, in response to easing inflation and rising risks to economic growth.

The ministry also said Singapore's economy grew 3.8 percent year on year in the first quarter, in advance estimates. This is slower than the 5 percent growth in the fourth quarter of 2024 and some market projections.

On a quarter-on-quarter seasonally adjusted basis, the economy contracted 0.8 percent, a reversal from the 0.5 percent expansion in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Analysts polled by Bloomberg forecast 4.5 percent year-on-year growth and a 0.4 percent quarter-on-quarter contraction.

In a ministerial statement on US

tariffs on April 8, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of Singapore Lawrence Wong said Singapore may or may not go into recession this year, but its growth will be significantly impacted.

On April 9, US President Donald Trump announced a 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs.

However, Singapore is still subject to the flat duty of 10 percent that Trump placed on goods arriving from all countries, which took effect on April 5.

The ministry warned that the tariff war posed "substantial downside risks" to the global economy. It said increased uncertainty may lead to a larger-than-expected pullback in economic activity as businesses and households adopt a "wait-and-see" approach before making spending decisions.

#### 'Technical recession'

The tariff moves could lead to a full-blown global trade war, which will upend global supply chains, raise costs and lead to a far sharper global economic slowdown.

There could also be disruptions to global disinflation and rising risks of recession in both advanced and emerging markets, leading to destabilized capital flows that could trigger latent vulnerabilities in banking and financial systems.

Song Seng Wun, economic adviser with the securities firm CGS International, said Singapore faces the risk of a technical recession, "given the many uncertainties surrounding the trajectory of economic growth".

A technical recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of gross domestic product contraction.

"While not ideal, it is a more favorable outcome than a full-year contraction," Song said.

Selena Ling, chief economist and head of global markets research and strategy at OCBC Bank, said "there is no clear sign of bottoming yet".

"A technical recession is possible as the brunt of the initial US tariff announcements has wreaked significant havoc on financial mar-

kets in April, and real economic fallout is anticipated in the coming months."

For the second half of 2025, Ling said, Singapore's economy is likely to sink further from the high base seen in the second half of 2024, when growth was 5.7 percent year on year in the third quarter and 5 percent in the fourth quarter.

This would bring her full-year 2025 growth forecast closer to 1.6 percent, assuming that the 10 percent tariff on Singapore remains intact, she said.

Brian Lee, an economist with Maybank, is maintaining his 2025 GDP growth forecast at 2.1 percent, slightly above the Ministry of Trade and Industry's new range.

"We are penciling in a growth slowdown, but not a recession at this stage," Lee said.

Growth in manufacturing was firmer than expected at 5 percent in the first quarter of 2025, though moderating from the 7.4 percent expansion in the fourth quarter of 2024, he said.

This points to front-loading of activity in March amid a race to manufacture and ship out orders before the US reciprocal tariff announcement on April 2, Lee said.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE



A container vessel leaves Pasir Panjang terminal port in Singapore on April 4, soon after the United States slapped 10 percent tariffs on imports from around the world including Singapore. ROSLAN RAHMAN / AFP

## New electric-car factory will move Cambodia's green push into top gear

The number of electric vehicles in use in Cambodia is expected to begin rising significantly when a BYD assembly plant begins producing new vehicles late this year.

BYD of Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, also plans to set up two service centers and install 200 electric vehicle charging stations across Cambodia, underscoring its commitment to supporting the infrastructure needed for a sustainable electric vehicle market.

The plant opening this year, in the coastal city of Sihanoukville will involve investment of more than \$30 million and is expected to be

able to turn out 10,000 vehicles a year.

"BYD has already secured a location in the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone, and work is underway to prepare the land for construction," said Sun Chanthol, first vice-president of the Council for the Development of Cambodia.

Chanthol said the factory's proximity to the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, the country's largest international port, would make it easier for the company to import parts and components.

Chanthol said that the trend of using BYD cars in Cambodia is on the rise. Recently, BYD also intro-

duced new vehicle models into the Cambodian market, such as the BYD Sealion 5 and BYD Atto 2, which it described as "not only high quality and equipped with advanced technology, but also highly fuel-efficient and affordably priced for the Cambodian market".

Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Manet said last year that BYD's setting up an assembly plant was a milestone in the government's efforts to attract international investors to the country.

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport recently reported that the number of registered electric vehicles in the country had

increased significantly, to 2,253 last year, compared with 313 in 2023.

The ministry also registered 413,067 fuel-powered vehicles, of which motorcycles accounted for the largest share, 353,603, followed by light vehicles, 54,692, and heavy vehicles, 5,841.

To help meet carbon emissions targets the government has committed to ensuring that by 2050 40 percent of electric cars and urban buses will be electric, as will 70 percent of motorcycles.

To achieve the target, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport has been encouraging people to

use electric powered transport, which is seen not only as environmentally friendly but more economic.

"The increase in EV use aligns with a rapidly accelerating global trend, and Cambodia is witnessing a parallel development of its own EV sector," a ministry representative said recently.

Hong Vanak, an economist with the Royal Academy of Cambodia, said the opening of BYD's assembly plant will deliver significant benefits to Cambodia, including creating jobs, upgraded work skills, increased tax revenue, an increase in vehicle part manufacturing

plants and profits from exports to international markets.

"In addition to all these benefits, Cambodia could also boost its reputation and attract more international companies to invest in the country," he said.

The opening of the Sihanoukville factory is also likely to encourage more Cambodians to buy EVs, given that they may be more affordable than vehicles now available, he said. People would also have fewer concerns about the availability of parts.

THE PHNOM PENH POST, CAMBODIA

## WORLD

# Fed's Beige Book: Tariff uncertainty raising costs in US

By ZHAO HUANXIN

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Pervasive uncertainty due to tariffs is increasing costs for US businesses and consumers, leading to a rush to buy inventory and a gloomy outlook for the future, according to the Fed's first economic survey since late February, when President Donald Trump began imposing duties on other countries.

The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday released its latest edition of the Beige Book to summarize economic conditions and prospects based on a variety of mostly qualitative information, gathered directly from its 12 regional districts.

The April 2025 report, based on surveys conducted since February, noted that "uncertainty around international trade policy was pervasive across reports", contributing to a weakening economic outlook and dampened business confidence nationwide.

It said that the "outlook in several Districts worsened considerably as economic uncertainty, particularly surrounding tariffs, rose".

The findings echoed the gloomy forecast of the International Monetary Fund, which cut the US economic growth projection for this year by 0.9 percentage point from its January forecast, with nearly half of that downgrade directly attributable to new tariffs.

The looming threat of new tariffs has already begun to alter consumer behavior and business operations.

A common theme throughout the Fed report is a "rush to purchase ahead of tariff-related price increases", particularly evident in vehicle and nondurable goods sales.

For example, in reporting ports and transportation activities, the Fed's Richmond District noted that "imports for autos and some retail goods increased as orders were placed to get ahead of potential tariffs", while loaded exports were down significantly, with one port noting an "unexpected and disappointing" 25 percent decline month over month.

"Port contacts were particularly concerned about the proposed port call tax on Chinese vessels which, by their estimates, could quadruple cargo handling costs," it said.

Some ports received multi-million-dollar tariff bills on Chinese cranes that were already ordered and en route as tariffs were enacted and are now subject to the tariff, it added.

However, the short-term boost in purchasing was not enough to offset a broader pullback in consumer spending and investment, as "most Districts saw lower non-auto

consumer spending".

Business leaders across sectors cited elevated input costs, supplier notices of price hikes and "firms reported adding tariff surcharges or shortening pricing horizons to account for uncertain trade policy", according to the Beige Book.

In the Fed's New York District, economic activity contracted modestly, as heightened uncertainty weighed on businesses and consumers.

"Businesses expressed significant concern about tariffs. Outlook darkened, with many businesses anticipating declining activity and rising prices," the New York Fed said.

This was also the case in the Kansas City District, where expectations about business activity and consumer spending weakened considerably, and prospects of price growth rose at a robust rate, most pronounced in goods sectors.

In the manufacturing sector, often at the front line of trade tensions, conditions were described as "mixed", with two-thirds of Districts indicating either stagnant or declining activity, and several Districts seeing a deterioration in demand for non-financial services, according to the Beige Book.

The Beige Book is published eight times a year.

On Wednesday, a coalition of 12 states filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration, alleging that recent tariffs constitute unauthorized tax increases on Americans.

"Congress has not granted the president the authority to impose these tariffs and therefore the administration violated the law by imposing them through executive orders, social media posts, and agency orders," New York Attorney General Letitia James' office said in a statement.

In a statement, White House spokesperson Kush Desai called the legal action a "witch hunt".

Also on Wednesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that he believes that excessively high tariffs between the US and China will have to come down before trade negotiations can proceed, Reuters reported.

Ryan Petersen, CEO of digital freight forwarder Flexport, took to X on Wednesday to issue stark warnings about the tariffs' impact on industry. "In the 3 weeks since the tariffs took effect, ocean container bookings from China to the United States are down over 60% industry wide," he wrote.

If the tariffs on China continue at this level, the US will see "a \$2T hit to economic activity in our country, the failure of tens of thousands of American businesses, and the laying off of millions of employees," Petersen wrote.

## Fighting fire



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire at a residential area in Manila, Philippines, on Wednesday. The fire, which broke out in the morning, was put out after more than nine hours, the fire authorities said. Around 300 families were affected. LISA MARIE DAVID / REUTERS

# EU says no intent to decouple from China

## Europe won't yield to terms for trade as Washington, Brussels engage in talks

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels

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The European Union will not decouple from the Chinese economy as a condition for reaching a trade deal with the US government as Brussels and Washington engage in trade talks, according to the European Commission.

The Wall Street Journal reported recently that the US intends to use its tariff talks with more than 70 countries to limit their trade with China. The Irish Times reported that the US will seek to force the EU to choose between the US and China based on a government briefing following a trip to the US by Simon Harris, Ireland's minister for defense, foreign affairs and trade.

European Commission deputy chief spokesperson Arianna Podesta said she would not speculate on what the requests by the US side are.

"The two parties are discussing what are the elements where a win-win outcome can be reached," she told the daily news briefing on Tuesday in response to a question raised by China Daily.

"This is distinct from our relationship with China... Our policy toward China remains the same since quite a while."

She noted that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has talked about the EU-China relations on a number of occasions and has also been in contact with Chinese counterparts.

Podesta reiterated that the EU's

policy is to de-risk, not to decouple from China.

When asked about US President Donald Trump blaming EU's VAT system, EU's rules on Big Tech companies and its food regulations as unfair trade advantages, Podesta did not answer directly but said the commission won't compromise on the safety and well-being of its citizens.

Trump and von der Leyen will both attend the funeral of Pope Francis in the Vatican on Saturday morning. European Commission has no information if the two will meet for the first time since Trump took office in late January.

Von der Leyen told Politico on Tuesday that "in a more and more unpredictable global environment, countries are lining up to work with us". She did not name Trump or the US, which is widely viewed in Europe as a disrupter of the global rules-based economic and trading system.

## Multilateral trading system

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday called on the UK and the EU to jointly safeguard the multilateral trading system during his phone conversations, respectively, with British Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Austrian Foreign Minister Beate Meisl-Reisinger.

Creon Butler, director of the global economy and finance program at Chatham House, wrote in an article on the think tank's website: "Instead of being a force for international stability and problem-solving, the US is now a key source

of global economic uncertainty. US policy appears to be driven by narrowly defined national interests and a transactional approach, with no place for values, principles, rules and long-term alliances."

He said other countries need to plan on the basis that the shift in US approach will be permanent and look beyond the immediate requirement of managing their individual ties with the Trump administration.

"A fracturing of this economic order poses an existential threat to the EU. The EU therefore has a strong interest in responding to Trump's actions by leading an effort to preserve an international economic system based on values, principles and rules," he wrote.

Andre Sapir, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a Brussels-based economic think tank, also said the EU should form an international open trade coalition in response to US tariffs.

He said EU leaders should engage with the leaders of G20 and non-G20 countries to agree on a statement for open and rules-based trade embodied by the World Trade Organization.

"Today, the United States is rejecting the basic tenets of the world trading system by adopting unilateral protectionist measures that will harm not only our nations but the entire world, including the United States," Sapir wrote in a draft letter he recommended for world leaders.

"We will not follow the protectionist path chosen by the United States. Instead, we will refrain from raising new barriers to trade and investment and respect WTO rules in our mutual relations," Sapir wrote on the Bruegel website.

# State Dept of US unveils overhaul plan

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday announced a comprehensive plan to reorganize the US State Department, aiming to deliver on US President Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy.

Rubio said in a statement that "we are facing tremendous challenges across the globe" and "in its current form, the department is bloated, bureaucratic, and unable to perform its essential diplomatic mission in this new era of great power competition".

"Over the past 15 years, the Department's footprint has had unprecedented growth and costs have soared. But far from seeing a return on investment, taxpayers have seen less effective and efficient diplomacy. The sprawling bureaucracy created a system more beholden to radical political ideology than advancing America's core national interests," Rubio noted.

"That is why today I am announcing a comprehensive reorganization plan that will bring the Department into the 21st Century," he said, adding: "This approach will empower the Department from the ground up, from the bureaus to the embassies. Region-specific functions will be consolidated to increase functionality, redundant offices will be removed, and non-statutory programs that are misaligned with America's core national interests will cease to exist."

The plan will reportedly reduce staff in the US by 15 percent and eliminate more than 130 domestic offices.

The changes would bring the total number of offices at the State Department's headquarters from 734 to 602. An additional 137 offices will be transitioned to another location within the Department to increase efficiency, CNN reported, citing an internal State Department fact sheet obtained by the news outlet.

The plan will cut around 700 positions in Washington, DC, and close offices focused on war crimes and global conflict, said the report.

But a new Bureau of Emerging Threats would be created to focus on cybersecurity and the proliferation of artificial intelligence, among other areas, The Washington Post reported.

Amid the efficiency campaign, Tesla CEO Elon Musk says he'll be spending less time in Washington, slashing government costs and more time running Tesla after his electric vehicle company reported a big drop in profits.

Meanwhile, Trump said on Tuesday he had no intention of firing the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, just days after his statement that he would like to terminate the head of the US central bank caused a stock market sell-off.

"I have no intention of firing him," Trump told reporters on Tuesday. "I would like to see him be a little more active in terms of his idea to lower interest rates," he added.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

# Trump levy 'fallacies' risk stagflation, economists say

By YIFAN XU in Washington

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Sweeping tariffs announced earlier this month by the Donald Trump administration are grounded in fundamental economic "fallacies" and risk triggering stagflation, financial instability and harm to US households and competitiveness, economists have said.

"The Trump tariff approach is premised on five fallacies and harms the economy in four major ways," said Lawrence Summers, former US treasury secretary and current Harvard University professor.

He spoke during an April 17 event hosted by the Peterson Institute for International Economics, or PIIE, on the macroeconomic impact of new US international policies.

Summers said the policy is marked by protectionism, nationalism, disregard for macroeconomic stability, and uses government tools against perceived adversaries.

"That is what we are seeing in the United States today," Summers said, adding the crucial difference that the US is central to the global economy. "This is by far the most dangerous moment since the end of the Cold War."

The first fallacy, he said, is the focus on bilateral trade deficits as a sign of exploitation. "I run a big

trade surplus with Harvard; I run a big trade deficit with my golf club. The golf club is not exploiting me," he said, adding that "there is no logic to thinking about bilateral deficits as a measure of exploitation".

Second, Summers disputed that trade deficits are inherently negative, saying they are the arithmetic counterpart to capital inflows. "I would rather live in a country that capital is trying to get into than a country that capital is trying to get out of," he said.

Third, he said tariffs are not a primary driver of overall trade balances, which are more linked to national spending versus income. "Look at non-protectionist Switzerland and its vast surplus. Look at heavily protectionist Brazil and its substantial deficit," Summers said.

The fourth fallacy is the belief that manufacturing holds the key to broad future prosperity for US citizens, he said.

Citing research by PIIE's Robert Lawrence, Summers pointed to a global decline in manufacturing's share of employment, driven by technology. He emphasized that only about 4 percent of US employment is in manufacturing production, a "sharply declining" figure.

"The idea that this is somehow going to be transformational for the

American economy... is, to be direct, completely delusional," he said.

Finally, Summers said that indiscriminate tariffs often backfire as a manufacturing support strategy because imports are frequently crucial inputs for domestic production and exports.

"Classic example: There are 60 times as many people working in the steel-using industries as there are in the steel industry," he said. "So, when we raise the price of steel... we are on net hurting competitiveness rather than increasing competitiveness."

Summers also outlined four major costs stemming from the policies. The first is a "major stagflationary shock", increasing prices while simultaneously reducing income, spending and employment.

The second risk is a financial crisis. Summers said he observed a shift in US markets toward an emerging market pattern where falling stocks coincide with rising bond yields and currency weakness, potentially exacerbated by large-scale selling of US assets, such as Treasuries, by foreign entities.

Third is lost competitiveness due to undermining of gains through international specialization; fourth, are the "epic levels" of uncertainty generated by an erratic policy envi-

ronment, discouraging investment and economic activity, Summers said.

Chad Bown, a PIIE senior fellow and former State Department chief economist, talked about the confusion surrounding tariff announcements and their real-world effects, at another PIIE event on the same day.

Bown mentioned smartphones, which were largely spared during the first Trump administration but now those from China face potential 20 percent tariffs. "Consumers this time around might say, 'Hey, the stuff that I buy is suddenly being hit with tariffs,'" he said.

Bown said that companies shifted some supply chains out of China during the first Trump administration, often to countries like Vietnam or Mexico. But with broad tariffs now potentially hitting all countries, that "China plus one" strategy becomes less viable.

## Facing uncertainty

"When these companies are faced with uncertainty with their supply chains, the natural response for them is to just say, 'We're going to wait. We're not going to make investments anywhere,'" Bown said.

Bown also expressed concern over the world potentially breaking into "distinct trading blocks, each increasingly isolated".



People work amid boxes of returned items for resale at a warehouse in Englewood, US state of Colorado, on April 17. Industry experts say price hikes, brought about by tariffs, may drive cost-conscious shoppers to turn to affordable items. DAVID ZALUBOWSKI / AP

"Unless and until China and the United States, Europe, and the other major economies can get together and start talking to each other, the world, I think, is going to move in that direction," Bown said.

Olivier Blanchard, PIIE senior fellow and former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, said of Summers' analysis, "I agree with him 100 percent on everything."

Blanchard said the global situation has moved from a rules-based system "to a world of the law of the jungle".

He also spoke of the complexity of the EU-US-China relationship, sug-

gesting that Europe is unlikely to fully align with a confrontational US stance toward China, given how Europe itself has been treated regarding trade policy.

In conclusion, Summers said, "What we are seeing is an unprecedented and massive self-inflicted economic wound", adding any recent market calm reflects hopes that the policies will be reversed, not become permanent.

He said the path forward depends on a "course correction that has never been more necessary in the last half century than in the United States today".

# BUSINESS

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## Power equipment bright spot among exports

By ZHONG NAN  
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Propelled by surging global electricity demand and accelerated infrastructure development, China's power equipment exports will maintain robust growth throughout 2025, said generator manufacturers on Wednesday.

They said rising opportunities stem from foreign tech companies' soaring power needs to develop artificial intelligence solutions, growing demand in many emerging markets for natural gas-powered generators and their efforts to accelerate the pace of industrialization.

**\$279.52 million**

value of exported power generation equipment of East China's Fujian province in Q1

Leroy Somer Electro-Technique (Fuzhou) Co, a Fuzhou, Fujian province-based generator manufacturer, put a new workshop into operation last month. The company has been rushing to expand production capacity to meet the surge in overseas orders this year.

"Our orders are already scheduled through October. With the new workshop, our capacity will increase by 50 percent," said Huang Jiyun, the company's chief administrator.

The high-voltage diesel generators the company produces are widely used across industries such as shipping, mining and data centers. In the past, the construction of AI data centers was concentrated in China and the United States.

However, several countries in Europe and Southeast Asia have entered the AI sector this year, becoming the fastest-growing markets for the company's genera-

tor exports — in particular after Chinese startup DeepSeek launched an open-source ecosystem that enables global developers to collaborate — accelerating technological iterations and lowering innovation barriers, said Huang.

East China's Fujian province exported 2.04 billion yuan (\$279.52 million) of power generation equipment in the first quarter, up 25.7 percent year-on-year, said Fuzhou Customs.

In the meantime, Fujian's exports in this category to economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative reached 1.68 billion yuan, marking a 28.3 percent increase on a yearly basis.

Tide Power Technology Co, another Fuzhou-based generator supplier, said its products were originally exclusively diesel generator sets. Three years ago, the company began manufacturing natural gas generators, and now, this segment accounts for nearly 30 percent of its business, with the market continuing to expand in the Middle East.

"We have added Africa to our market footprint this year as many African countries involved in the BRI have abundant natural gas reserves," said Chen Yifeng, managing director of Tide Power, adding the company plans to explore new market opportunities in South America later this year.

Aeolon Technology Co, a Shanghai-based wind power equipment manufacturer, shipped 36 million yuan worth of large wind turbine blades to Europe from a port in Nantong, Jiangsu province, last week, said Nantong Customs, a branch of Nanjing Customs.

"Our output is estimated to have more than doubled year-on-year in the first quarter, with the total production value expected to exceed 800 million yuan," said Wang Dongliang, the company's vice-president.



Officials from Fuzhou Customs inspect goods at a power generator manufacturer in Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

### Briefly

#### Digital readers reach 670m in 2024 in China

The number of digital readers in China reached 670 million in 2024, marking a 17.5 percent year-on-year increase, according to a report on digital reading released on Wednesday in Taiyuan, North China's Shanxi province.

#### Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the

yuan, weakened 42 pips to 7.2116 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Enhancing electricity supply



Employees from State Grid Suqian Power Supply Co work on an electricity tower to accelerate the building of the 220-kilovolt Limin substation in Sihong county of Suqian, Jiangsu province. The substation will help boost local photovoltaic power usage and safeguard the reliable operation of the power grid during the upcoming peak summer period. WU DI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Economists: Unite to oppose US tariff hikes

Countries should pursue mutually beneficial economic ties, they say

By WANG KEJU, ZHU WENQIAN and ZHOU LANXU

As the United States clearly leverages tariffs as a bargaining chip in its dealings with trade partners, the rest of the world must stand together to respond in a cooperative manner, rather than negotiate for Washington's mercy, economists have urged.

"The US economy is large indeed, but it only makes up 15 percent of global trade," said Justin Yifu Lin, former chief economist at the World Bank, and dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University.

"If the rest of the world, accounting for 85 percent of world trade, comes together to oppose the US tariff wars and pursues economic exchanges in a more open and mutually beneficial manner, the US will only end up hurting itself more than other economies," Lin added.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the 145 percent tariff he imposed on Chinese imports "is very high" and it "won't be that high" and will eventually "come down substantially", as he expressed optimism about future talks to reach a trade deal between the world's two largest economies.

This rapid shift in the White House's stance toward China within less than a month — from one of maximum pressure to a more conciliatory approach — is largely due to Beijing's resolute countermeasures in defense of its own interests, rather than any willingness to compromise in negotiations with Washington, experts said.

On Tuesday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said more than 100 countries have reached out to the US to initiate trade talks after Trump announced sweeping universal tariffs earlier this month, with 18 nations having submitted proposals. China is not among these.

Instead, the multiple rounds of US tariffs on Chinese imports have prompted China to hit back with

counter-tariffs on US exports totaling 125 percent.

"When smaller economies, whether it's ASEAN or African nations, attempt to negotiate with the US one-on-one, they lack sufficient bargaining power to obtain the concessions they desire, as the US holds a much stronger negotiating position," Lin said.

Another problem when dealing with the US is that even if these smaller economies agree to certain terms, the US may demand even more concessions from them, Lin said.

"I hope that all countries can work together, not only for their own interests, but also for the collective well-being and development of the entire world," Lin added.

Yang Weiyong, an associate professor at the University of International Business and Economics, said that China, as the world's second-largest economy, can seek deeper economic cooperation with Europe by proactively expanding imports from the continent and even cutting all tariffs on imports from the European Union to zero.

Yang added that there is also significant room for China and the EU to strengthen two-way investment flows by resuming negotiations on the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

"By joining hands, China and the EU can not only strengthen their bargaining power in dealing with the US and defend their own interest, but can also set an example for the rest of the world, encouraging more economies to further open up to each other and jointly fight against US economic bullying," Yang said.

Despite the external pressures stemming from Washington's tariff hikes against Beijing, experts believe that China is capable of achieving its annual growth target of around 5 percent this year.

"Many of the policy measures that the Chinese government take in response to the US actions should have already been war-gamed and considered in our scenario simula-

tions," Lin said. "Beijing has sufficient tools at its disposal."

As part of China's latest moves to boost consumption, the country plans to further expand the coverage of its unilateral visa-free entry policy, and open more tax-refund stores and optimize tax refund procedures for overseas visitors.

China's recent policies that allow overseas visitors to get their tax refunds right after purchases at designated stores nationwide are expected to attract more visitors.

For the upcoming May Day holiday that runs from May 1 to May 5, the booking volume of inbound travel products has surged over 170 percent year-on-year, according to Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency.

"We will continue to innovate consumption scenarios, create an international friendly consumption environment and further promote inbound consumption," said Li Gang, director-general of the department of market operation and consumption promotion at the Ministry of Commerce.

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry, together with five other departments, launched the "Shopping in China" campaign on April 13 to help stimulate domestic consumption, and various promotional events will be carried out nationwide.

"While the US has thrown the world into chaos, China has concentrated on doing its own work well, making the Chinese economy a stable anchor for the development of the world economy, global trade, and world peace," said Chen Wenling, former chief economist at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

"China not only stands on its own position to solve its own problems, but also stands on the global position to solve global issues," Chen added.

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## Significant progress in HV cable testing tech

By LI JIAYING and YIN MINGYUE

China recently made a significant breakthrough in high-voltage cable testing technology with the successful application of its first domestically developed special test bushing for connecting both inside and outside high-voltage switchgear rooms.

The technology, developed by State Grid Zhoushan Power Supply Co, was applied during the cable tolerance voltage test at the 110-kilovolt Daixi substation in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province.

It effectively addressed a longstanding challenge in the gas insulated switchgear environment — a critical component of power systems — where limited internal space and structural constraints have long complicated testing procedures.

The new test bushing, made from high-strength composite insulation materials, features a modular structure. It is lightweight, resistant to voltages up to 250 kV and is designed for easy installation.

"Today's generation, transmission, conversion and consumption of electricity happen in an instant, which makes traditional power technologies struggle to cope with the intermittent, fluctuating and unpredictable nature of new energy sources," said Sun Zhengyun, secretary-general of the China Energy Research Society.

Sun added that ensuring the safe and stable operation of the power system requires a deep integration of cutting-edge technologies with conventional power infrastructure.

According to the power company, the new solution can shorten test preparation time by 60 percent, improve operational safety by 90 percent, and can be reused, substantially reducing operational and maintenance costs.

In addition, the team developed the technology by conducting data modeling based on domestic and foreign cases to accurately locate the core problem of limited high-voltage lead channels. Through structural design optimization, outdoor series resonant high voltage was safely introduced into indoor terminals while ensuring insulation strength and spatial adaptability, the State-owned power operator said.

Yi Xuedong, head of the research center at the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, emphasized that as China pursues high-quality economic development, SOEs should further solidify their position as key drivers of technological innovation and lead the energy technology revolution.

"SOEs should continue deepening collaboration among energy think tanks, fostering cooperation between domestic and international institutions, central and local SOE think tanks, as well as those focused on both 'hard technologies' and 'soft sciences' — to drive the new energy security strategy forward with greater depth and effectiveness," Yi added.

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## T-bonds worth 1.3 trln yuan to be issued

By ZHOU LANXU, OUYANG SHUIA and LI XIANG

China will kick off on April 24 the issuance of this year's ultra-long-term special treasury bonds — a major off-budget tool to boost growth and address structural challenges — worth 1.3 trillion yuan (\$178.3 billion), as policymakers front-load fiscal stimulus moves to proactively counter the incoming demand shock stemming from US tariffs.

To be issued at a larger size and

faster pace than last year, the bonds will effectively create demand for investment and consumption while reiterating policymakers' commitment to growth stabilization, analysts said, with additional government bond issuances possible in the second half.

The Ministry of Finance said a total of 21 tranches of such bonds — totaling 1.3 trillion yuan, up 300 billion yuan from last year, and with maturities of 20, 30 and 50 years — will be issued from Thursday to Oct 10.

On Thursday, bidding is set to be done for the first two issuance tranches worth 121 billion yuan in total — one tranche worth 50 billion yuan with a 20-year maturity, and the other worth 71 billion yuan with a 30-year maturity. Interest on the bonds will begin accruing from Friday and will be paid semiannually, the ministry said.

Li Yishuang, chief fixed-income analyst at Cinda Securities, said the bond issuances began earlier than expected — a month ahead of last year's schedule — possibly reflecting the front-loading of fiscal stimulus in

response to potential impacts from the US' tariff measures.

Liu Gangling, vice-president of Bank of Tianjin, said that Thursday's issuances represent a proactive fiscal policy measure by the central government, contributing to both short-term economic growth and laying the foundation for high-quality development over the long term.

"In the face of a complex external environment, the issuances will not only help expand effective demand, but also promote supply-side upgrades," Liu said.

In addition to more efficient issuance arrangements, this year's issuance plan also features improved fund allocation, reflecting policy pri-

orities of expanding domestic demand and boosting consumption, said Sun Lin, managing director of fixed income, currencies and commodities department at China International Capital Corp Ltd. Of the total, 800 billion yuan will be allocated to projects in line with major national strategies and aimed at enhancing security capacity in critical areas. The remaining 500 billion yuan will support large-scale equipment renewals and consumer goods trade-in programs, with 300 billion yuan specifically earmarked for trade-ins — a 150 billion yuan increase from last year.

According to estimates from ratings agency CEXI, the 1.3 trillion

yuan in ultra-long special treasury bonds could lift China's GDP growth by 1.7 to 1.9 percentage points this year, while stronger monetary easing will be needed to complement the fiscal push.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura, said the country has the scope for approving additional government spending quota in the second half, with spending focuses likely on boosting services consumption, improving the social security system, safeguarding real estate project delivery and providing liquidity support for developers.

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## BUSINESS

## TRADE

# Car exports surge in Q1 despite woes

Nation exports 1.42 m vehicles, up 7.3 percent y-o-y, CAAM data show

By LIU YUKUN  
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Chinese car exports experienced a surge in the first quarter despite looming US tariff threats, driven primarily by enhanced product competitiveness and a slight sales growth in Global South countries, said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association.

Simultaneously, automotive components achieved historic peaks in exports during the quarter, with the United States being the primary market for such parts, Cui said.

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM), in the first quarter, China exported 1.42 million vehicles, marking a 7.3 percent year-on-year increase. Chery led the pack with around 254,000 units exported, a marginal 0.1 percent increase, comprising 17.9 percent of the total exports. BYD followed closely, exporting around 214,000 vehicles, an impressive surge of 120 percent year-on-year.

Overall, traditional fuel vehicles saw a 3.7 percent decrease to 978,000 units, while exports of new energy vehicles surged by 43.9 percent to 441,000 units. Within the new energy vehicle category, pure electric vehicle exports reached 290,000 units, up by 16.7 percent and constituting 66 percent of all new energy vehicle exports. Plug-in hybrid EV exports stood at 152,000 units, marking a 160 percent increase.

Despite the positive performance, Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the CAAM, cautioned about the complex and volatile external environment, encouraging businesses to implement the national strategy of expanding domestic demand, closely monitor external changes and effectively address negative impacts on exports.

Cui said that the recent US tariff hikes have not significantly impacted Chinese automakers. One crucial factor is that in 2024, China exported only around 116,000 vehicles to the US, accounting for a mere 1.81 percent of total Chinese vehicle exports. Another factor is that domestic brands have thus far had close to zero sales presence within the US.

"In 2025, car exports have already reached a high level and automotive component exports have hit historic peaks, experiencing a remarkable surge. Motorcycle exports have also experienced robust growth," Cui said, highlighting that automotive component sales have performed well in the US market despite trade conflicts.

"In recent years, car exports have demonstrated exceptional performance, soaring from \$34.5 billion in 2021 to \$117.4 billion in 2024, indicating explosive growth. Furthermore, in 2025 there has been a consistent trend of slight monthly growth," he added.

Looking ahead, Cui said that Chinese automobiles hold significant development potential in the global market. He called for stronger internationalization efforts and deeper collaboration with countries and regions like those involved in the Belt and Road Initiative and with Global South countries.

According to data from the CAAM, China's exports of automotive goods to other BRI economies in the first two months reached a cumulative total of \$20.15 billion, an 8 percent year-on-year increase, constituting 57.8 percent of total automotive goods exports.

Specifically, vehicle exports reached 646,000 units, a 19.1 percent increase, while new energy vehicle exports reached 192,000 units, up by 51.7 percent, CAAM data showed.



Employees work on a PV panel production line in Hefei, Anhui province, in October.

RUAN XUEFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## US tariff move on PV products seen as a setback for global industry, green push

By ZHENG XIN  
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The additional tariffs imposed by the United States on photovoltaic products from Southeast Asia form a "myopic" and "self-defeating policy" that will significantly inflate costs for US consumers and run counter to global trends, said Chinese solar companies and industry experts.

"The recent US imposition of additional tariffs on Southeast Asian photovoltaic products is essentially a myopic move that runs counter to the trend of globalization," said Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL Group, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"The industry's resilience lies in its innovation capacity and global reach. While tariffs impose costs, they won't derail the larger trend, as technological advancement and global deployment will ensure continued growth," he said.

Zhu said these additional tariffs are not only a setback for the global clean energy transition, obstructing the affordable and rapid deployment of renewables worldwide, but also detrimental to the US solar market itself, artificially inflating costs for developers and consumers while failing to adequately stimulate domestic production.

"Such protectionist measures disrupt well-established global supply chains and go against the necessary integration required to scale up solar energy globally," he said.

The US Commerce Department has announced plans to impose tariffs of up to 3,521 percent on imports of solar panels from four Southeast Asian nations, intensifying headwinds already threatening the country's renewable power development.

It comes after an investigation a year ago when several major solar equipment producers sought to protect their US operations, accusing Chinese solar panel makers with factories in Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam of shipping panels at a lower price.

While tariffs impose costs, they won't derail the larger trend, as technological advancement and global deployment will ensure continued growth."

Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL Group

Under the new tariffs, leading Chinese solar technology companies including Jinko Solar, Trina Solar and JA Solar are to face duties as high as 40.3 percent to 375.19 percent on their products and operations related to the affected markets.

According to Chen Fei, analyst of solar supply chain research at global consultancy Rystad Energy, leading Chinese solar manufacturers have already made plans to set up manufacturing facilities in regions outside of the four Southeast Asian countries, and could commission production as early as this year.

Rystad Energy said that planned US module manufacturing capacity is projected to surge, assuming no significant delays or cancellations. However, a gap between crystalline silicon cells and module production capacity will persist.

In the short term, US manufacturers will still need to source external cells to meet domestic demand, said Chen.

According to Zhu from GCL Group, around 80 percent of the \$12.9 billion photovoltaic exports from the four Southeast Asian countries to the US involve Chinese technology and capital, while domestic US production can only meet 31.6 percent of market demand.

"This self-defeating policy has driven US module prices to triple the global average, inflating local

solar project costs by 27 percent to 30 percent," he said.

Zhu said China's solar products, fueled by continuous technological breakthroughs, have become increasingly affordable and efficient, making clean energy accessible to a wider global market and critically accelerating the worldwide energy transition.

China's module exports rose 13 percent year-on-year in 2024 to 235.93 gigawatts, while its granular silicon technology, boasting over 30 percent cost reduction, achieved 45 percent global shipment growth with market penetration exceeding 25 percent, he said.

"Notably, perovskite tandem modules have broken the 31 percent efficiency barrier at half the cost of crystalline silicon cells and are now being deployed in demonstration projects in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, directly enabling and speeding up the global energy transition."

Confronting unilateral protectionism, the solar industry has advocated multilateral cooperation rather than unilateral imposition of tariffs.

"Amid an irreversible global energy transition, China commands over 80 percent of polysilicon, wafers, cells and module capacities, while the US excels in system integration and smart grids. With annual solar installations growing 10 percent globally, our collaboration could accelerate carbon neutrality."

Zhu believes that while these tariffs create short-term disruptions, their long-term impact will be limited because the true drivers of the solar industry's future are technological innovation and globalized deployment, which continue unabated.

"While the US tariffs may be but a grain of sand in globalization's tide, technological breakthroughs and win-win cooperation remain the sunlight illuminating our future," he said.

Wang Zixian and Yuan Ziming contributed to this story.

## Retailers up effort to help out exporters

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Supply chains and retailers in the country must enhance coordination to accelerate the focus shift of export-oriented enterprises toward the domestic market and help stimulate internal consumption, a senior official at the China General Chamber of Commerce has said.

Fu Longcheng, deputy head of the chamber, said that while export-to-domestic sales is not a new concept, it has taken on renewed urgency in the current economic climate, given the higher tariffs imposed by the United States on Chinese exports.

"Under the strong guidance of the Ministry of Commerce and the coordination of the chamber, the initial progress has been quite promising," Fu said. "This demonstrates the sense of responsibility shown by Chinese distribution enterprises, as well as the supply chain capabilities, pragmatic spirit and operational efficiency of well-known retail companies."

Looking ahead, Fu said the top priority should be ensuring efficient coordination between exporters and domestic retailers.

"We must treat this matter as the most urgent task to complete," he said.

The government has identified expanding domestic demand as a long-term strategic goal. Fu said that supply chains and distributors must collaborate more deeply to address the issue seriously and proactively.

He urged export-oriented enterprises to open up their supply chains and develop products that meet domestic standards and preferences. "They need to create channels and promote compliant, high-quality, and innovative products designed for the domestic market," he said. "With a market of 1.4 billion people, the prospects are even more promising."

One company actively pursuing this shift is Ningbo Today Food Co Ltd, a leading tuna supplier. Zhang Kaijie, the company's vice-general manager, said the firm has exited the US market and is now turning its attention to Europe and China.

"We're currently in talks with major retailers such as Sam's Club, Yonghui Superstores and Freshippo while also exploring online sales channels," Zhang said. "As Chinese people, we must have a spirit of never giving up. Our products have proven themselves overseas and will certainly be embraced by domestic consumers. We will overcome this difficult period."

Zhang said he is optimistic that once Chinese consumers become familiar with their products — such as tuna — there will be less reliance on exports. "Only by ensuring quality can we open up new sales opportunities," he said.

On Tuesday, Ningbo Today, along with Jiangsu Huateng Personal Care Products Co Ltd — a dental hygiene supplier based in Jiangsu province — launched the first batch of nine products at four Yonghui Superstores locations, including the Beijing Xilongduo shopping venue.

Yonghui plans to expand the range of exported products and the number of stores offering them by the end of April. As of Tuesday, the retailer had received over 500 cooperation inquiries and entered discussions with more than 300 high-quality supply chain companies. Over the past two weeks, Yonghui has assigned a team to monitor a special email account for cooperation inquiries from export-oriented firms. Contracts are being signed quickly to expedite the process.

The product offerings span frozen foods, snacks and household goods, many of which come from domestic manufacturers with long-standing relationships supplying Sam's Club and Costco.

Chinese consumers now have access to high-quality, cost-effective goods previously available only through overseas retail channels, Yonghui said.

"This collaboration is also bringing premium goods from the mature supply systems of Sam's Club and Costco into the hands of Chinese consumers — creating a win-win for all parties involved," said Yonghui.



Vehicles to be loaded for export are parked at a port in Shanghai on April 13. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Dongguan leverages AI to upscale manufacturing

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou  
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As a major manufacturing city in Guangdong province, Dongguan has launched an initiative to promote the integration of artificial intelligence within traditional manufacturing, aiming to drive the deep application of cutting-edge technologies in the industrial sector.

The city plans to develop at least three large-scale foundational models for manufacturing, with more than 135 industrial small models with high precision and stability, industrial apps, and industrial intelligent bodies by the end of 2027.

In the latest move, an AI big model center was launched in the city in late March, marking the establishment of the nation's first prefecture-level big model center focusing on the manufacturing sector and accel-

erating the overall process of intelligence across industries.

The center is located in the Songshan Lake area, a high-tech industrial base in Dongguan. Built and operated by Dongguan Digital Group, a State-owned enterprise, it positions itself as the city's AI application base for the manufacturing sector.

Leveraging robust hardware and software infrastructure of Chinese technology company Huawei, the center offers three types of services to enterprises including computing resources, open models and AI engineering capabilities, helping local companies to quickly enhance model accuracy with minimal data and low costs, and accelerate their journey toward intelligent upgrades.

Huawei plans to establish a city-level AI infrastructure in Dongguan resembling a power plant, aiming to address the issues of expensive computing power and algorithms for

small and medium-sized enterprises, and provide inclusive AI computing power and algorithm services.

"We are making efforts to make the intelligent capabilities of large models as accessible and convenient as electricity, available for immediate use whenever companies need it," said Yu Peng, president of big data and AI at Huawei Cloud.

The deployment of AI in Dongguan's industrial enterprises is by no means accidental but stems from a strong foundation in its strength in the digital and intelligent manufacturing sector.

Out of 14,000 industrial enterprises above a designated size in Dongguan, 120 intelligent factories or workshops have been officially recognized, with 8,448 enterprises successfully undergoing digital transformation, according to the local government.

Dongguan Moldbao Smart Technology Co, one of the companies

recognized for its intelligent factories, has established a benchmark intelligent factory in the Songshan Lake area, covering over 15,000 square meters in the mold industry, equipped with dozens of fully flexible automated production lines.

"The core of AI integration in manufacturing lies in companies having real industrial scenarios and corresponding structured data," said Wang Sheng, vice-president of Moldbao.

Building upon the company's profound foundation in digital manufacturing with a history of over a decade, AI has been integrated to achieve intelligence throughout the entire process, according to Wang.

"Each product is different, and producing it efficiently involves a multitude of industrial knowledge, processes and technologies, including materials, industrial software, precision machining, testing and various

other dimensions," said Wang.

Since 2023, the company has been exploring AI applications and continuously experimenting with multiple models, according to Wang.

"In some scenarios, efficiency has even been increased by around 5-10 times," he said.

Currently, the company has achieved initial closed-loop processes with AI applications in specific scenarios such as mold quoting, mold scheduling and quality inspection.

"The workshop is more like a super industrial supermarket — when customers come in, they can immediately understand what we can do and choose the solutions that suit their needs," said Wang.

To further push the AI initiative, Dongguan plans to select and release 10 AI-enabled new industrialization typical application cases each year for demonstration.

A reward of up to 1 million yuan (\$137,000) will be given to those successfully included in national typical application cases, the local government said.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Talks with China will not materialize if the White House expects all get no give

So, good news. And bad news. Let's start with the good.

The US administration seems to be softening its tone somewhat when envisaging a possible deal with China, with the White House talking of a "substantial" lowering of tariffs on the country. The US increased tariffs on all imports from China to 145 percent earlier this month, while implying that the country faces up to a 245 percent tariff on some goods "as a result of its retaliatory actions". But the US president acknowledged on Tuesday that 145 percent is a "very high" level, and that he hopes it will "come down substantially" if the two sides engage in talks.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Tuesday that he expects a "de-escalation" in the trade war between the world's two largest economies, saying that the tariff showdown is unsustainable.

It is well acknowledged that Beijing has stood its ground in response to the US administration's "shock and awe" tariff strategy, announcing tit-for-tat measures. It would be dreaming of dragons to perceive Beijing as being brought to its knees through intimidation by whatever means. It can be expected that any deal, should one materialize, will involve both sides making concessions.

But it is too early to conclude from the seemingly conciliatory remarks of the US leader that the White House has returned to its senses in dealing with China, especially given its capricious behavior and zero-sum mentality.

Which brings us to the bad news.

According to reports, US trade officials have finalized steep tariffs on most solar cells from Southeast Asia, after the American Alliance for Solar Manufacturing Trade Committee accused Chinese solar panel makers with factories in Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam of receiving unfair subsidies that allowed them to ship panels priced below their cost of production, making US goods uncompetitive.

If these tariff barriers come into effect, they will inflate the import costs for green technologies, not only obstructing the global energy transition but potentially derailing economies from their carbon neutrality road maps.

The US president's reelection campaign produced the memorable sound bite "We will drill, baby, drill" on the back of \$75 million donated by the fossil fuel industry. This secured the declaration

of a national emergency to enable the federal denial of the scientific evidence and the transfer of pollution costs from industry to the global population.

The emergency was declared on the falsehood that "hostile state and nonstate foreign actors" have targeted the US domestic energy infrastructure, and weaponized its "reliance on foreign energy" on the realization that China is leading the world to a sustainable future as the world's largest producer of clean energy and green technology.

The targeting of China's green technology by the US administration is willing to let the world "burn, baby, burn" so long as the US is atop the bonfire of its vanity.

The latest tariff range-finding in addition to other aggression targeting China — such as the announcement of hefty port fees on Chinese ships in the US' ports and plans to pressure countries into restricting trade with China in exchange for exemptions from US tariffs — has greatly undermined the likelihood of a deal with China.

Beijing has always said the door to talks is open, and Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun reaffirmed this on Wednesday. But it is its consistent position that applying pressure, making threats and blackmailing are not the correct ways to deal with the differences between the two countries. If the US really wants to engage in dialogue, it should create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations on the basis of "equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit".

The White House press official said the US president and the administration "are setting the stage for a deal". Hopefully, this means what it says, because it will serve both countries' interests and the rest of the world if the US administration can bear the big picture of China-US relationship in mind and try to find a workable solution to its trade disputes with China based on equality and mutual benefits.

Unfortunately, the direct collision between trade policy and climate objectives that the proposed solar panel tariffs herald exposes the hubris of Washington, which is willing to hold the well-being of all hostage to "Make America Great Again".

The world is not what it was, the US needs to get along to go along. Agreements are two-way streets. The trade talks it is trying to precipitate with China and other countries are a chance for the US to listen rather than just dictate.

## Space memo smear hard-sell for US satellites

An undated internal memo, US media outlets recently obtained from the State Department, urges countries to shun Chinese satellite services, citing security concerns.

Without providing any evidence to substantiate its claim, the document, which is ostensibly to provide talking points for senior US officials meeting with the representatives of other governments, warns that Beijing could use the satellite services it provides to gather military information and sensitive intelligence.

The irony is the world knows clearly that it is the United States that has been doing that — including targeting its allies and partners — taking advantage of its dominance of the space technology and industry.

With its "Star Wars" program transformed from a tool to consume Soviet Union resources during the Cold War into a standard configuration connecting its defense, intelligence and technology strategies, using its satellite services to gather other countries' "military information and sensitive intelligence" is only a small part of the US' overall space-related undertakings.

The US has built a holistic intelligence collecting system stretching from its satellite network in space, such as those related to SpaceX's Starlink program, to the digital terminals on Earth made up of smartphones, databases and base stations and the global submarine optical cable networks under its control.

The huge US-controlled system, which is expanding and developing fast, plays a crucial role in the wars, conflicts, cyberattacks and assassinations it engineers around the world.

It is the huge hegemonic interest associated with the US' dominance in the sector that has prompted it to guard against any other competitor touching its cheese in this realm, even if latecomers, such as China, are doing nothing but carrying out peaceful and cooperative space exploration and research.

China regards space, which is public space, as an extended part of the community with a shared future for mankind and acts accordingly, working with other partners, including both developed countries and Global South countries, to jointly

learn more about the universe we live in.

With its Shenzhou XX crewed spaceship scheduled to launch on Thursday, which is itself a fruit of international cooperation, China's fast rise in the space industry has provided more countries with opportunities to take part in space exploration and enjoy the benefits related to a wide range of applications in agriculture, logistics, transportation, people's livelihoods and disaster prevention, rescue and relief, among others.

In a stark contrast, the US treats outer space as its exclusive territory, a newfangled land awaiting colonization. With its I-come-I-conquer expansionist view of space, the US regards space a first-come-first-served virgin land.

With a dominance of the realm that is hard to be changed by any latecomers, what the US is worried about is not only China's progress in related technology and application, but more importantly the concept Beijing has put forward which entitles even the least-developed countries to the peaceful use of outer space.

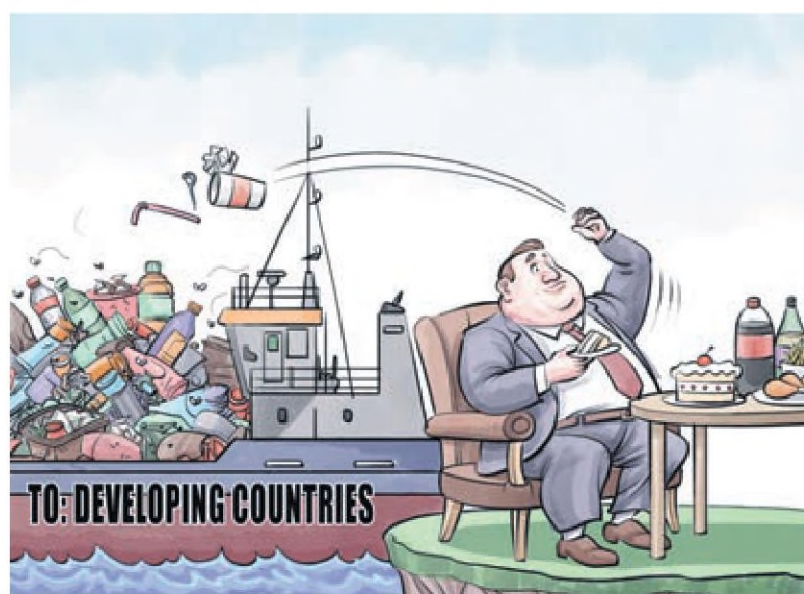
As that concept is increasingly embraced by countries as a principle for the space industry, the US' concerns that, if unchecked, it will ultimately lead to the formation of a set of inclusive and fair rules on space exploration, are understandable. If so, the US' dominance of the realm will be lost to its global obligation and responsibility.

Tellingly, the State Department memo also had advice for US officials who were asked about the Starlink satellite communication services, suggesting how they could promote it to fill the vacancy they hope will be left by their proposed ban on Chinese satellite services with reliable satellite services provided by a trusted US operator.

When SpaceX launched its first batch of Starlink satellites in May 2019, there were only around 2,000 operational satellites in the entire sky including a small number of high-orbit satellites. Today, that number has grown to over 11,000 most of which are low-orbit ones — nearly 7,000 of which belong to Starlink. And SpaceX has said it hopes to grow the number to 42,000 by 2027.

Looked at from that orbit, the memo is nothing but an advertising leaflet from the State Department for US business.

Jin Ding



## Opinion Line

## UK should not let itself be hoodwinked by Washington

Even before he took office as prime minister of the United Kingdom in July, unlike other Western politicians, Keir Starmer held a comparatively practical view of China, being aware that if the UK really wanted to breathe life back into its stagnant economy it could not afford to turn the world's second-largest economy from a key trading partner and investor into an opponent. That made him one of the few among his Western peers to win an election without playing the "China card".

Although that does not mean the Starmer government has a rational outlook on China-related issues, such as those relating to Hong Kong, given that it still aligns closely with the United States on the agenda, it has done a good job in not letting these issues stall the overall healthy development of Sino-UK relations.

Ever since President Xi Jinping met Starmer in Rio de Janeiro in November, the two sides have doubled down on their joint efforts to not only break the ice frozen during the

earlier Rishi Sunak government — which blindly toed the then Joe Biden administration's China-containment policy — but also explore every opportunity to resume, expand and upgrade their cooperative projects.

A series of high-level exchange channels and mechanisms that once played an important role in ushering in the "golden decade" of bilateral relations before the COVID-19 pandemic have been resumed, including the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, Strategic Dialogue and Energy Dialogue.

To carry on the positive momentum of Sino-UK relations, Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy on Tuesday, in which Wang urged the two countries to bear the responsibility of upholding the international order against the current backdrop of rampant unilateral bullying.

By saying that China, in the face of the US' tariff war, which also hurts the UK, aims not only to

defend its own legitimate rights and interests but also to uphold international rules and the multilateral trading system, Wang was apparently trying to persuade the UK not to be hoodwinked by the US to colude with it in targeting China.

By reiterating that China will remain committed to mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries, and to sharing development opportunities with the world, Wang was telling the Starmer government that as long as the UK can continue to uphold its strategic autonomy in handling relations with China, it can only gain from its rational decision. Beijing is not asking the UK to choose sides between China and the US but stand on the right side of history.

It is to be hoped that, as the top UK diplomat noted, the UK can further enhance exchanges between the two countries on bilateral and multilateral issues of mutual concern, jointly addressing challenges.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Yangtze River still vital part of modernization journey

An ecological barrier and a golden waterway, the Yangtze River plays an important role in China's socioeconomic development. Accounting for 43.1 percent of the nation's total population and 47 percent of its GDP, the Yangtze River Economic Belt is one of the most active regions in China. As such, it will also bear the brunt of the United States' trade, tech and green industry attacks.

The 2025 Government Work Report proposed redoubled efforts to support regions such as the Yangtze River Economic Belt so that they can play a stronger role in driving the growth of surrounding areas.

At present, a green industry system is rapidly taking shape along the Yangtze River Economic Belt, with the green transition of traditional industries accelerating. The region is vigorously developing sectors such as electric vehicles, supported by green funds and bonds to finance technological innovation. For instance, Hubei, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and Shanghai have become hubs for green and high-tech industries, using innovation to upgrade local industries. This approach is expanding market prospects and promoting regional sustainable development.

The year 2025 marks the conclusion of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the strategic planning phase for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Provinces and cities within the Yangtze River Economic Belt should continue to implement the new development philosophy and prioritize a healthy eco-environmental system and green growth. Emphasizing technological innovation as a core principle, they should balance ecological protection with economic development. By maintaining a long-term perspective and focusing on sustaina-

ble development, they can lay a strong foundation for the high-quality development of the region.

Looking to the future, the economic belt should continue to strengthen ecological protection, enhance regulation and early warning system building, and firmly implement the 10-year fishing ban to maintain the stability of the ecosystem. It should, on the one hand, reduce pollution discharged in production, and on the other hand, collaboratively reduce carbon emissions and expand green areas. At the same time, ecological restoration should be enhanced, especially in key ecological function zones and ecologically fragile areas, to promote the comprehensive restoration of the ecosystem.

To better withstand the US' efforts to constrain the country's development, the economic belt should accelerate the green upgrading of its traditional industries and improve its resource utilization efficiency. The region needs to make full use of its unique strengths in scale and efficiency and research and development to cultivate new quality productive forces, and develop strategic emerging industries and future industries, increasing the proportion of green industries. Meanwhile, it should strengthen the building of a green technology innovative system, optimize the integration of scientific and educational resources, enhance collaboration on scientific and technological innovation, promote cutting-edge technological breakthroughs, and attract science and technology talents. It also needs to accelerate its green energy transition and build a new energy system by utilizing coal in a clean and efficient manner, and integrating advantageous traditional clean energy sources such as hydropower with new energy sources such as wind power, solar power, and

hydrogen energy.

To jointly promote green development, an interprovincial cooperation and consultation mechanism should be established and enhanced to facilitate exchanges and information sharing across the region. By promoting its valuable experiences and practices, the region can also provide reference for domestic and international green development. It can carry out pilot and demonstration projects in zones with special features to explore new modes and paths for green development.

In this process, green cooperation with the countries and regions taking part in the Belt and Road Initiative should not be neglected. Provinces and cities in the Yangtze River Economic Belt should take advantage of their technologies and capital strengths regarding electric vehicles, smart grids and other green industries to jointly build green industry parks and smart grid projects and develop solar and wind resources with relevant economies engaged in the BRI projects. They can also contribute to the joint global pollution abatement and the response to climate change by offering more experience and reference through piloting some ecological restoration projects applying new technologies, sharing afforestation and wetland restoration experiences and technologies, and building cross-border ecosystem monitoring and early warning systems.

These measures are conducive to providing China with a robust way to rebuff the US' attempts to shackle its development and the world with Chinese wisdom and approach to realize sustainable development in major river basins.

— CHENG CHANGCHUN, DIRECTOR OF JIANGSU YANGTZE RIVER ECONOMIC BELT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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## COMMENT

Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani

## Time ripe for Global South to step up

The tectonic shifts in global trade are not limited to Washington and Beijing — their ripple effect is shaking the foundations of economies across the Global South.

China, once dismissed as the “world’s factory”, has evolved into the anchor of many developing economies. Its Belt and Road Initiative has brought infrastructure where no one else would invest. Its markets have become critical destinations for commodities, textiles, and electronics from countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, Kenya, and Peru. For many, China is no longer just a partner — it is the engine pulling them forward. But trade wars don’t recognize nuance. Tariffs levied on China will have a ripple effect. When supply chains falter, it’s not just factories in Guangzhou that will go dark — it’s also the port in Colombo, the garment line in Dhaka, and the mining town in Zambia. The US might target China, but the collateral damage lands squarely on the developing world, endangering jobs, currency stability, foreign investment, and the fragile hope of industrialization.

The US seems to be rewriting the rules it once enforced, not with diplomacy but with directives. Developing countries remember this playbook:



it’s the same one used during structural adjustments, when “liberalization” meant dependency. But today, the Global South is more informed, more connected, and less willing to be pawns in great power games.

Asia, in particular, finds itself at a crossroad. The ASEAN, India, Pakistan, Central Asia — all have diverse relationships with both China and the US. What they seek is not alignment with one or the other, but stability, access, and respect in a multipolar world.

The US-China rivalry is forcing choices that developing nations do not want to make. Do we invest in Huawei or fear sanctions? Do we export to China and risk offending Washington, or vice versa?

China’s response has been one of outreach — seeking economic alliances in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. It brings opportunities but also needs to address concerns about equality. The other developing countries should negotiate with clarity, ensuring robust and fair partnership.

If the rules of trade are no longer rules but tools of coercion, then developing countries will be the first to suffer. From World Trade Organization being sidelined to the International Monetary Fund’s politicization, global institutions risk becoming weapons in a new Cold War.

However, as the economic confrontation between the United States and China shakes the foundations of world trade, a new question arises: what if

Asia and the Global South refused to be spectators and instead chose to become architects of a new order?

The rise of China as a formidable economic force has already diversified the options for trade and investment.

To gain “true teeth”, regional trade blocs must build mechanisms for conflict resolution, tariff standardization, digital infrastructure sharing, and labor mobility. Most importantly, they must see regional trade as a strategic shield against external volatility.

Imagine if countries in Africa and Latin America jointly invested in green technology supply chains, reducing their reliance on European or US patents. Or if ASEAN and South Asian nations jointly created food security mechanisms and emergency reserves insulated from external shocks.

One of the most underestimated effects of the US-China trade war is the erosion of global trust. Agreements can no longer be assumed to be binding. Commitments can be reversed by elections or populist waves. For countries in the Global South, this unpredictability has profound consequences. Aid gets frozen. Market access is revoked. Sanctions appear without warning.

But in this collapse of trust lies a hidden opportunity.

The time is ripe to imagine a different economic future — one where prosperity is not extracted from the periphery for the benefit of the cen-

ter, but one where the periphery becomes a network, generating its own innovations, financing its own growth, and setting its own rules.

This model would not abandon globalization — it would redefine it.

Think of an economic belt stretching from Morocco to Malaysia, linked by renewable energy grids, AI-driven logistics, and mobile banking. Think of a trade model where goods are not just exported, but co-created, with intellectual property shared and adapted. Think of a Global South that is no longer fragmented and dependent, but integrated and interdependent — on its own terms.

This century, contrary to the headlines, is not for the US to reclaim. It is for the world to shape — and the Global South to lead. But leadership requires courage. If Asia and the developing world refuse to simply choose sides in someone else’s rivalry and instead choose to write new rules, then trade becomes more than just commerce — it becomes a platform for sovereignty, justice, and shared prosperity.

So the question is no longer, “Who will lead the world?” but, “What are we waiting for to step up and shape it ourselves?”

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Lan Shunzheng

## Commercial space missions boast vibrant industry

In 2016, China designated April 24 as its Space Day to commemorate its achievements in space exploration. The aerospace industry has boomed in recent years. China began its tryst with commercial space launches in November 2024, when it successfully launched a Long March 12 carrier rocket from the Hainan commercial spacecraft launch site in Wenchang, South China’s Hainan province. That was a milestone as it established China’s commercial spacecraft launch site’s capability to execute launches.

Commercial space activities are market-driven, aimed at developing, manufacturing, launching, and applying space technology and services through profitable commercial activities. Technological breakthroughs, reduced costs and promotion by the government have led to the growth of the commercial space industry.

The United States is the leader in this sector with a growing market size. A report by the US-based Satellite Industry Association showed that “during 2023, the overall global space economy generated revenue of \$400 billion. The commercial satellite industry continued to be dominant, increasing to \$285 billion and accounting for 71 percent of the world’s space business”.

The active participation by and innovation of private enterprises has helped boost the US’ commercial space market. For example, commercial space giant SpaceX has made achievements in rocket launches, satellite manufacturing, and satellite internet. The US also leads in commercial space investment and financing. According to US-based Space Capital, a venture capital firm specializing in space-based technologies and their applications, the US accounted for 51 percent of equity investment in the space economy. The commercial space market in the US has vitality and attractiveness.

China entered the commercial space sector late but it has developed rapidly since 1985 when it announced that the Long March series of carrier rockets would be available for international satellite launch services.

Furthermore, China has continued to expand its satellite internet constellation projects, aiming to provide global broadband coverage.

Now, the booming space industry is contributing to China’s high-quality economic development. With policy support and robust market demand, China’s commercial space industry has gained its share of the international market. According to the China Astronautics Association for Quality, China’s commercial space sector has grown from 0.6 trillion yuan (\$82.04 billion) in 2018 to 1.9 trillion yuan in 2023, with an average annual growth rate of 23 percent. It is expected that the growth will continue in the coming years.

Commercial space emphasizes technological innovation to drive industrial innovation, and it plays a crucial role in developing new quality productive forces and building a strong space nation. After decades of endeavor, China is ready to accelerate the development of the commercial space industry. Commercial space appeared in China’s 2024 government work report as a new growth engine and a key driver of high-tech development in 2025.

China’s commercial satellite and rocket companies have proliferated rapidly in recent years, but the lack of commercial spaceports has hampered the growth of the commercial space industry. The launch in Wenchang means that China has completed the full industrial chain of the commercial space industry, from satellite and rocket manufacturing, commercial launch site testing and launching, and satellite data application services.

China’s first civilian-built space launch site in Hainan employs a flexible and efficient commercial mechanism for mission organization and management, which will promote social innovation.

The inaugural launch utilized a remote measurement and control system. The No 2 launch pad, executing the maiden mission, is China’s first versatile launch pad designed for medium-lift liquid-fuel rockets, offering multi-mission adaptability, rapid turnaround, and high compatibility, which shows China’s space industry has improved in cost efficiency and competitiveness.

The launch site can execute high-cadence and cost-effective launch missions, providing a stable and reliable platform for commercial rocket and satellite companies. The progress in China’s launch capability will support large-scale low-Earth orbit constellation deployment missions for civilian and commercial space infrastructure projects.

The Long March 12 carrier rocket is China’s first 3.8-meter-diameter launch vehicle and most capable single-core rocket, coupled with its modular design, which optimizes payload and cost performance.

Another innovation is streamlining pre-launch operations by assembling, testing and transporting the rocket lying flat. This has advantages in cost efficiency, security, accessibility and turnaround because the design eliminates the need for vertical assembly building, reduces high-altitude work, makes maintenance and modification easier, enhances efficiency, and enables high cadence potential.

The Long March 12 carrier rocket is poised to enter a high-frequency launch phase and will enhance China’s ability to deploy satellites into sun-synchronous orbits and assemble low-Earth orbit constellation networking.

China launched a Long March 8 carrier rocket from the No 1 launch pad at the Hainan commercial spacecraft launch site in March, sending 18 satellites into space.

This month, the Hainan government has bolstered policy support to expedite the development of commercial space launch capabilities, including establishing an innovative platform for rocket recovery and reusability.

Furthermore, China has continued to expand its satellite internet constellation projects, aiming to provide global broadband coverage. The country’s commitment to reducing launch costs and increasing the frequency of commercial missions has positioned it as a formidable player in the global space industry by 2025.

Continuous advancement will bolster China’s space transportation and bring new technology, industry, and business models to the commercial rocket sector.

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Vu Quy Son

## Neighbors building a shared future together

The Chinese leader’s selection of Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia for visits after the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries underscores Beijing’s emphasis on fostering cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. This engagement aligns with a new era of neighborhood diplomacy, characterized by a more pragmatic and comprehensive approach. The focus on strengthening ties with neighboring countries is expanding the scope of cooperation between China and Southeast Asian countries.

Both sides recognize the importance of political cooperation in strengthening and further developing relations, particularly through regular high-level meetings. In essence, cooperation is being strengthened on the foundation of steadily growing political trust between China and individual Southeast Asian countries. The realm of practical cooperation is also widening. Key areas include trade, investment, infrastructure connectivity and so on within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Current geopolitical shifts and the imposition of tariffs by major powers are driving Southeast Asian countries to enhance cooperation with China in order to diversify markets and mitigate risks. Furthermore, collaboration with China is seen by Southeast Asian businesses as an opportunity to adjust business models, improve corporate governance, and meet the rising demands of the Chinese market, while capitalizing on China’s increased efforts to attract foreign investment.

Infrastructure development, including railway connectivity, is emerging as a key trend. An increasing number of Southeast Asian countries are willing to boost railway cooperation projects with China. The future is likely to see the emergence of railway networks that not only connect every single Southeast Asian country but also China and Southeast Asian countries. Those networks have the potential to support Southeast Asian countries diversify their transportation routes, reaching not only the Chinese market but also other international markets, including Europe.

In addition, the promotion of two-way investment between China and Southeast Asian countries is also expanding. China is increasing its investment projects under the Belt and Road Initiative and actively seeking investment from Southeast Asian countries. Significantly, during



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

President Xi Jinping’s official visits to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, investors from many regions including these three countries participated in the China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, reaffirming China’s continued attractiveness as a promising market for foreign investors, including investors from Southeast Asia.

The room for technological cooperation between China and Southeast Asian countries has also broadened further, as the demand for such cooperation and talent education is growing. China’s leading role in high-tech fields, demonstrated by its achievements in areas like artificial intelligence and humanoid robots, is largely attributed to its effective policies for nurturing, training, and attracting technological talent.

China is promoting the application of science and technology across various aspects of its socio-economic life. Currently, Southeast Asian countries also have a strong demand for cooperation in high-tech development and the training of science and technology professionals. Tech firms in Southeast Asia suggest that Chi-

nese technology may be well-suited to their requirements.

At the same time, the pattern of Chinese technology development might hold lessons for them. The leader of FPT, a tech giant in Vietnam, said “FPT will develop AI models similar to DeepSeek, designed for specific areas and industries”. Taken together, high-tech cooperation is considered a bright spot in the relationship between China and its neighboring countries. This was emphasized by To Lam, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, in his meeting with the visiting Chinese leader on April 14, and in many agreements signed between China and Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia during Xi’s official visits to those countries.

China and Southeast Asian countries are also diversifying their cooperation within multilateral frameworks, extending beyond China-ASEAN collaboration to include mechanisms like BRICS, RCEP and so on. China and ASEAN countries both believe in promoting the high-quality implementation of RCEP and swiftly

concluding negotiations on the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0.

Simultaneously, China and ASEAN countries affirm strengthening coordination and multilateral cooperation in line with the building of a community with a shared future between China and each individual ASEAN country. That is why China and Southeast Asian countries reaffirmed to defend the international system with all the countries as its core, the international order with international law as its foundation and the adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the basic norms of international relations as the cornerstone. Such shared understandings between China and Southeast Asian countries can assist both in navigating the uncertainty, instability, and unpredictability of the international environment.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

LIN BOQIANG

## Removing obstacles

Leveraging the China-ASEAN FTA is the best way to address challenges posed by European and US tariffs, shortage in public funds and lagging infrastructure

Against the backdrop of an intensifying global climate crisis, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as major developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region, face similar environmental pressures to their development aspirations. Currently, with the alignment of China's carbon neutrality goals and ASEAN's energy transition plans, bilateral collaboration in addressing climate change is entering a new period of strategic opportunities.



As for the new energy industrial capacity, Chinese wind and solar companies have established integrated production capacities in ASEAN, making the region a critical link in the global supply chains of Chinese enterprises. For instance, in September 2023, Chinese solar panel maker Trina Solar announced an additional \$400 million investment in Vietnam to build photovoltaic production lines, which are expected to commence operations by 2025. The module production capacity of Chinese PV companies totaled about 50 gigawatts by the first quarter of 2024, accounting for 53.6 percent of the region's total.

In the new energy vehicle sector, ASEAN has become a key destination for Chinese automakers' overseas investments. BYD's first overseas passenger vehicle plant, completed in Thailand in 2023 with an investment of 7 billion yuan (\$964 million) and an annual production capacity of 150,000 units, mainly serves the ASEAN market. Chinese brands commanded about 67 percent of ASEAN's NEV sales in 2023.

Chinese companies are actively developing new energy projects in the ASEAN countries. Since 2024, multiple new projects have broken ground, including PowerChina's agreement with Manila Electric Company in November to develop Southeast Asia's largest PV project — with a total installed capacity of 3.5 gigawatts of solar power and 4.5 gigawatt-hours of energy storage — which is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 1.23 million metric tons annually upon completion.

Despite the steady progress, external factors such as global economic conditions and geopolitical factors are posing challenges to the advancement of China-ASEAN climate cooperation. First, the new European and US tariff policies have led to the risk of overcapacity in the deployment of new energy production capacity in the region.

In 2024, the United States revoked tariff exemptions for solar modules from four South-

east Asian countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam), while in 2023 the European Union's new Batteries Regulation raised compliance costs for meeting carbon footprint requirements for electric vehicle batteries produced in Southeast Asia. These measures have significantly increased export costs to Western markets, forcing Southeast Asian producers to pivot to local sales. As such, ASEAN's market size will be limited and may eventually lead to the problem of overcapacity. For example, production lines of LONGi Green Energy Technology and Trina Solar have already suspended some production in the region due to sanctions.

Second, public funding shortages have become a crucial bottleneck to further bilateral climate cooperation between China and ASEAN.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, ASEAN requires an annual investment of \$45 billion by 2030 for renewable energy and grid infrastructure to align with a 1.5 C pathway. However, from 2016 to 2020, public investment in ASEAN's energy as a whole totaled about \$20 billion. This systemic funding gap has forced Chinese investors to bear higher financial risks when investing in the region. For example, PowerChina's Nam Ou cascade hydropower project in Laos — operational for 29 years with electricity payments from Laos — is grappling with \$555 million in unpaid bills by Laos' state power company since 2020. Such incidents will undermine bilateral climate cooperation between China and ASEAN countries.

Third, lagging development in infrastructure has constrained returns on Chinese companies' new energy projects in ASEAN countries.

Weak energy infrastructure in ASEAN — including fragmented grids, limited high-voltage transmission lines and inadequate energy storage — has severely undermined the economic viability of renewable projects invested by Chinese companies. For instance, Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade reported a 15 to 20 percent curtailment rate for solar power in 2023 due to grid constraints, resulting in less-than-satisfactory returns on Chinese solar projects.

With the substantial conclusion of Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area upgrade negotiations in October 2024, the two sides have taken a crucial step forward in aligning rules and standards in areas such as trade and investment liberalization, the digital economy and the green economy. The green economy, as one of the core issues in the upgrade of the free trade zone, is becoming a significant lever for deepening cli-

mate cooperation.

To deepen climate cooperation between China and ASEAN, the following measures should be considered.

To start with, in response to the challenges posed by European and US tariff policies impacting the export of new energy production capacity in Southeast Asia, China and ASEAN should restructure the competitiveness of the regional industrial chain with localization at the core to reduce costs and enhance efficiency.

The two sides should leverage FTA incentives to improve the efficiency of local raw material procurement, reduce cross-border logistics, and cut production costs. They should also invest in technical training for local workers to enhance employment and reduce labor costs, fostering a "policy-industry-employment" virtuous cycle.

Second, in light of the issue of risk-return mismatch caused by a shortage in public funds, China and ASEAN should innovate the collaborative model between resources and projects.

In particular, they should use the China-ASEAN FTA as a platform to link Chinese State-owned enterprises' renewable investments with ASEAN resource development rights.

Based on that, they should jointly promote local currency-based cross-border settlements and hedging mechanisms to reduce currency risks, lower the payment pressure of host countries and ensure sustainable investments by Chinese companies.

Last, it is imperative to strengthen cross-regional collaborative planning capabilities, given the constraints that lagging infrastructure imposes on the economic viability of projects.

Leveraging the FTA as a platform, the Chinese-led cross-regional collaborative planning should be regarded as a key point to promote the simultaneous development and coordinated layout of grid upgrades and new energy infrastructure construction. By directly matching grid expansion and energy storage facility construction with the development of new energy bases, power production facilities and power transmission facilities can be put into operation simultaneously, thus shortening the project investment return cycle and fundamentally ensuring the economic viability of the project.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

LOU CHUNHAO

## Architect of progression

Revitalizing the Bandung Spirit is essential as the US is now firmly entrenched in its Cold War revival

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the 1955 Asian-African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference. As the first major international gathering hosted by newly independent Asian and African nations without Western colonial



powers, this was a historic milestone signaling the Global South's emergence as a significant political force. This momentum continued through the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77, with Asia, Africa and Latin America forming the "Third World" — a collective capable of challenging Cold War bipolarity between the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the 1980s, deepening South-South cooperation has strengthened their collective influence. Today, developing nations are increasingly shaping global governance and the economic order, asserting independent stances on key international issues. Their growing prominence solidifies the Global South as a transformative force in world affairs.

Although today's world bears little resemblance to that of 70 years ago, and nations now face vastly different development challenges, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Bandung Spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation remain vital inspirations for Global South collaboration. This is particularly relevant as geopolitical rivalries surge, regional conflicts break out, and hegemonic power politics intensify.

Global South nations must uphold political independence and maintain independent foreign policy. When the Bandung Conference convened, Asia and Africa were experiencing a surge of liberation movements. This historic gathering not only accelerated decolonization across three continents but also catalyzed their political awakening. By embracing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and advocating "recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small" and "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers", the conference crystallized these nations' determination to stay neutral in the Cold War. These principles formed the bedrock of the Non-Aligned Movement. Yet tragically, some nations later abandoned the Bandung Spirit, only to become victims of the proxy war between the two major powers of the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Today, while most Global South nations have achieved national independence, maintaining genuine sovereignty and strategic autonomy remains an enduring challenge. The US, clinging to its deep-rooted hegemonic mindset, purposefully sows

ideological divisions — exaggerating differences in governance models and resurrecting Cold War rhetoric.

Its goal is to coerce developing nations into picking sides in a renewed bloc confrontation, just as during the US-Soviet rivalry. Yet history's lesson is unequivocal: Hegemonic powers stir up geopolitical conflicts only to serve their own interests, and nations that surrender their autonomy inevitably become instruments of hegemony — a fate now befalling many European states trapped in strategic paralysis. Their predicament stems precisely from compromised security sovereignty, leaving them unable to shape their own futures. China rejects this dangerous Cold War revivalism. Instead, it reaffirms the Bandung Spirit — independence without isolation, solidarity without subordination. True strength lies not in choosing camps, but in developing cooperation rather than alliances.

Global South nations must also pursue cooperation by maximizing common ground while managing differences. The Bandung Conference marked the debut of the newly founded People's Republic of China on the multilateral diplomatic stage. At the time, most participating states lacked diplomatic ties with Beijing, harbored misconceptions about its political system, and — under US instigation — some even conflated communism with colonialism in ideological attacks targeting China. Facing this charged environment, the Chinese delegation pioneered the principle of seeking common ground while putting aside differences. This constructive approach not only secured majority endorsement but also neutralized Washington's campaign to isolate China diplomatically.

Today, Global South nations naturally exhibit diverse political systems, development stages and socioeconomic conditions — differences that inevitably lead to competing interests or even occasional friction. While such divergence is normal, certain countries deliberately exploit these variations to drive wedges between China and its Global South partners, sabotaging South-South cooperation. For instance, the US-led Western media have relentlessly hyped up a so-called Chinese "debt trap" and "new colonialism", seeking to shift the development pressure of Global South nations onto China. Also, despite China's unequivocal commitment to the developing world, some Western media have sensationalized the baseless discourse that China has "graduated" from being a developing country and even fabricated the highly ideological "Global East" concept, attempting to exclude China from the Global South. Therefore, Global South countries must adhere to the principle of seeking common ground while putting aside differences, defend their collective historical legacy, focus on similar current

needs, and pool their combined strength in cooperation.

Finally, Global South countries must unite and strengthen themselves to achieve win-win cooperation. Since the Bandung Conference, they have actively promoted South-South cooperation, using it to leverage North-South cooperation, and collectively reshape the international political and economic order in favor of developing nations. Their collaborative efforts have yielded significant progress in critical areas including climate change mitigation, food and energy security, and sustainable development. This collective rise is underscored by data showing the Global South's economic transformation — its share of global GDP has surged from roughly 20 percent at the turn of the century to around 40 percent today, contributing over 80 percent of global growth in the past two decades.

Undeniably, Global South nations confront unprecedented transformation pressures. Having suffered greatly from the century's worst pandemic and resurgent deglobalization sentiment, they now grapple with cascading challenges — from debt crises and inflation to widening digital divides. Compounding these difficulties, developed countries are reluctant to take on their due responsibilities and are even reducing or suspending development aid. The US, as chief architect of this regression, is undermining multilateralism by withdrawing from international bodies and shirking responsibilities, worsening the development deficit of many Global South countries. This dire landscape makes reviving the Bandung Spirit as the architect of progression not just preferable but existential. Only through united action can these nations pool governance solutions to common challenges; strategically combine financial resources, technological capabilities and critical mineral endowments; present a unified front in defending global trade stability; and fortify vulnerable supply chains. Such coordinated efforts would do more than mitigate current crises — they would position the Global South as an indispensable stabilizer in an uncertain world.

Looking ahead, China will further promote the Bandung Spirit, implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, and enrich the Bandung Spirit with new dynamism of the times. China will work with the Global South partners to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

## LIFE

As night falls, an outdoor movie is playing in a public area in front of the Fisher Coffee shop on Shiquan Street in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, captivating residents. Nearby, lights flicker on the river as tourists on boats lift their phones to capture the enchanting scene.

The bustling street and tranquil river, along with the harmonious coexistence of tourists and residents, bring immense joy to He Qing, founder of the coffee shop and who has lived on this street for more than a decade.

"This street is steeped in culture, yet brims with the vibrancy of everyday life. Following last year's revitalization, our needs for living, entertainment and work can all be met without leaving the area," says He.

Situated at the heart of Suzhou's ancient city area, Shiquan Street has been a bustling hub for centuries. Stretching 2 kilometers, it still retains the traditional layout of streets in Suzhou, where waterways run parallel to roads and streets neighbor rivers.

Classical Suzhou gardens, century-old schools, and traditional residences lie along its length.

Following the nationwide trend of old street renovations, Shiquan Street completed its transformation at the end of June last year, quickly emerging as a trendy destination that draws numerous visitors for photo ops. The quality of life for the 20,000 households residing here has also improved, according to surveys by local communities.

Thus, the street has been labeled a fashionable district that embodies the lifestyle and architectural charm of Suzhou. In March, it was recognized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development as a model case for neighborhood revitalization.

"I think the success of this street's renovation lies in the fact that everyone's opinions were respected. Every business owner and resident was able to participate in the renovation and management of the neighborhood," says He.

Her coffee shop was originally a traditional residence. The open space in front of it was vacant and not very clean before the renovation. During last year's renovation, she proposed the idea of taking over this public area and turning it into an outdoor cultural living room for the community, which received strong support from the neighborhood.

Now, the public area frequently hosts activities organized spontaneously by residents and business owners, such as performances by bands made up of chefs and bartenders, resident choir performances, and community book reading events. It often attracts large numbers of tourists who stop by to participate and take photos.

"The coffee shop feels like home to me and my husband; it's very cozy," she says.

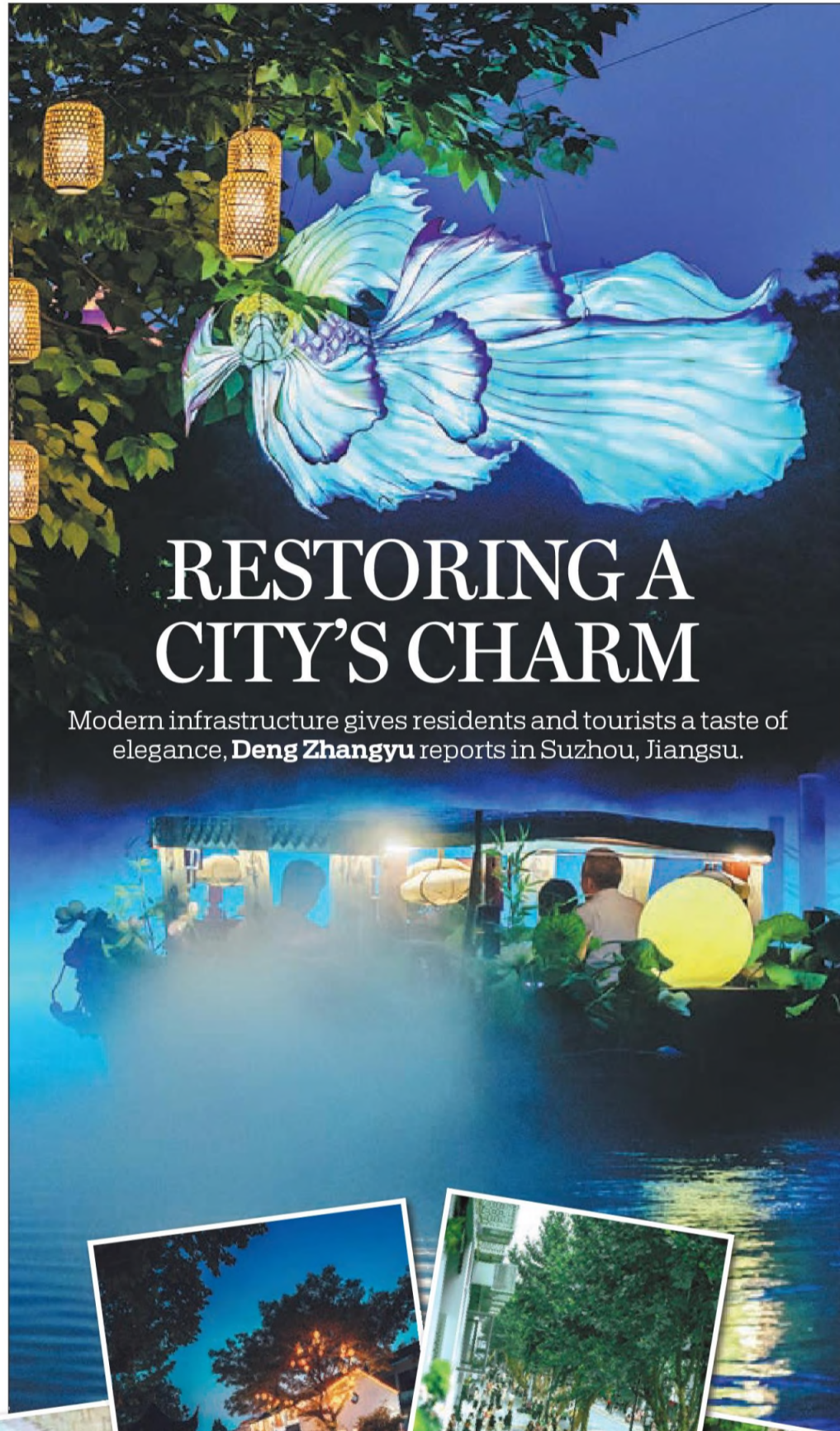
Although it was already 8:30 in the evening, a few high school students were dotted around the cafe doing their homework. Residents were sipping coffee and chatting, while tourists sat on the riverside seats enjoying the night view. Occasionally, tour boats passed by, with tourists waving to the people on banks.

As the chief planner and designer of the Shiquan Street renovation, Deng Dong expresses his admiration for the leisurely lifestyle and inherent elegance of Suzhou residents.

"Residents here live with a sense of refinement, and they approach tasks with great meticulousness," says Deng, who is also vice president of the China Academy of Urban Planning & Design.

Since the beginning of this century, Deng has been involved in renovation projects in Suzhou.

He jokingly refers to himself as a "new-style Suzhou native". He describes the renovation of Shiquan Street as a successful example of people-oriented development, where residents, shop



## RESTORING A CITY'S CHARM

Modern infrastructure gives residents and tourists a taste of elegance, **Deng Zhangyu** reports in Suzhou, Jiangsu.



**Top:** Tourists enjoy a misty nighttime boat ride on the river next to Shiquan Street in Suzhou.

**Above from left:** The ferry terminal; Shiquan Street retains the typical layout of streets in Suzhou; After renovation last year, the street is a major tourist attraction. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



owners, and the community collaborated in construction and governance. During last year's renovation, Deng and his team spent a significant amount of time engaging in detailed communication with residents and businesses.

They gathered every individual's concerns, such as uneven roads and the lack of parking spaces for motorcycles, as well as the community's shared expectations for their neighborhood. This process also sparked enthusiasm for participation, leading residents to offer suggestions and voluntarily join renovation efforts.

"The government invested approximately 47 million yuan (\$6.43 million) in the project, while businesses and institutions on the street voluntarily contributed more than 100 million yuan. Their active participation in the neighborhood's renovation represents a sustainable model for community development," says Deng.

Walking along Shiquan Street, which is lined with bakeries, cafes, trendy clothing stores and time-honored restaurants, every shop owner Deng encounters greets him warmly and invites him in, just like an old friend.

Across the river, on the other side, is a residential area.

"The people here are particularly meticulous in their work. Once my design proposal was approved, they took the initiative to implement it with a strong sense of ownership," he says, adding that Suzhou has been home to scholars and literati since ancient times. This scholarly spirit is also ingrained in the DNA of the city's residents.

In the last century, Shiquan Street was known for its international hotels, and later for its bars and jade shops. In recent years, the government has hoped to inject new vitality into the area to attract more young people.

Deng, who has worked on numerous neighborhood renovation projects across the country, says that a neighborhood is not a showcase but a place for living.

The renovation of Shiquan Street has successfully met the needs of all parties. Tourists can visit to take photos and experience Suzhou's leisurely and refined lifestyle and traditional culture, while residents can enjoy a comfortable living environment.

According to statistics compiled by Deng's team, the area now attracts an average of 20,000 visitors per day.

"In any neighborhood renovation, we must respect local culture and local people," he adds.

Ji Zhaoliang, who works at the subdistrict office responsible for the Shiquan Street area, says after the renovation, residents have been enthusiastically and actively organizing activities. During the cultural and arts season, they invite street performers, community bands, and Kunqu Opera enthusiasts to perform in public spaces in the neighborhood.

Regular intangible cultural heritage markets are held to showcase Suzhou intangible cultural heritage items, such as embroidery and woodblock prints, inviting tourists to participate. Additionally, a reading festival is organized, at which literary classics are read in the traditional houses of the neighborhood.

"The residents are highly autonomous. We work together with all residents and businesses in the area to manage the neighborhood, to ensure a bright future," says Ji.

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## Restoration builds on tradition of bustling commercial activity

By **DENG ZHANGYU** in Suzhou, Jiangsu

In his studio in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, print artist Gu Zhijun is carefully making a more than 1-meter-long woodblock print, a masterpiece that has consumed five years of his dedicated work and remains unfinished. It is his tribute to the city of Suzhou.

It vividly captures the bustling splendor of the Changmen area during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Inside and outside the city gate, shops line the streets, and people bustle about, creating a lively scene. Several rivers converge here, and the docks are teeming with boats coming and going, painting a picture of dynamism and prosperity.

Gu is an inheritor of Taohuawu woodblock printing, a traditional form of folk art known for its vibrant colors, vivid patterns, and diverse themes, and depictions of folk customs and legends.

Many years ago, during a visit to Japan, Gu discovered an original woodblock print depicting the bustling scenes at Changmen, one of the eight gates of Suzhou. In 2021, he resolved to recreate this Qing Dynasty print to allow people to "witness the grandeur of that era".

Changmen is located in the city's northwest. *Chang* means a connection to the heavens, symbolizing that the vassal state of Wu, which existed more than 2,500 years ago with present-day Suzhou as its capital, would receive divine protection and grow increasingly prosperous.

Since ancient times, the Changmen area has been a flourishing and prosperous place of water transport, attracting many people to settle and conduct business there. During the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties, countless vessels gathered here and as a result of canal transport, Changmen experienced a busy period of commerce.

"In my painting, I carved 384 fig-



Several rivers converge at Changmen, which was once a freight hub. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ures from all walks of life. There are also lots of businesses such as medicine stores, banks, jewelry stores, hotels, noodle shops and restaurants. The vivid style of painting shows the prosperous ancient scene," says Gu, 64.

His print aligns with the expecta-

tions of the Suzhou government. They plan to renovate and upgrade the Changmen area this year to revive past prosperity.

The local government plans to use modern techniques and language to present the splendid scenes of the past. Currently, the Changmen city

gate is admission free to the public, and the Ming and Qing dynasty buildings, docks, and time-honored shops in the area are undergoing renovation.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Yao Yongqiang, vice chairman of the Suzhou Artists Association, says that since ancient times, many literary and artistic works have centered around Changmen. Well-known writer Cao Xueqin described it in his novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* as "one of the most affluent and romantic places in the mundane world". Many established ink painters from the Ming Dynasty also lived here.

"It can be considered the financial and trade center during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was once synonymous with the city of Suzhou," Yao says of the importance of Changmen.

In the area, there are Ming and Qing dynasty buildings, former residences of famous people, ancient temples, and numerous time-hon-

ored restaurants, all interspersed with residential buildings.

For planner Deng Dong, the renovation of Changmen is a daunting task and challenge, as the area contains a large number of ancient buildings mixed with residential zones. Most importantly, its renovation is tied to the origins of the city of Suzhou.

"This place is rich in history and is fundamental to the establishment of Suzhou. Although I have undertaken many renovation projects in this city, I still need to revisit historical materials and carefully listen to the suggestions of the residents," he says.

Deng, who is also vice president of the China Academy of Urban Planning & Design, has been involved in the renovation of Shiquan Street in Suzhou.

"Whether renovating a single street or an entire district, the goal is always to bring a better quality of life to the people. Respect for individuals always comes first," he says.

## LIFESHANGHAI

## Street singer busks his way into hearts

Grassroots musician takes social media by storm, using song and graciousness to bring people together, **Wang Xin** reports.

Luo Xiaoluo, a grassroots singer from Guilin in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, found his roots in Shanghai's streets to become a music sensation particularly popular among middle-aged and elderly audiences.

Making his journey to Shanghai in 2005, the 41-year-old busker, who uses a stage name, is dedicated to presenting live music shows on streets and in parks and other public spaces to share the beauty of music with his clear, healing voice.

Luo has garnered nearly 3 million followers on social media, drawing massive crowds nationwide in each of his offline performances.

Luo has been fascinated by music since childhood and began playing guitar in 1999. However, over the past two decades, he had many career setbacks as a bar singer, graphic designer, wedding photographer, and e-commerce worker. It wasn't until 2011, when he made a trip to an ancient town, that he revisited his musical aspirations.

In 2019, he became a certified street singer in Shanghai by the Shanghai Performance Trade Association. He began performing in public parks and squares, where he sat and interacted with his audiences.

"Some musicians can be a bit too conceited to sing on the streets. They look down on buskers for 'selling' their talent cheap, but I disagree. Instead, I sometimes feel such an ordinary form of performance is the superlative form of musical expression. The core lies in how the music is presented, which you need to sing into others' hearts," says Luo.

Dubbed the "grassroots singer" by his fans, Luo is particularly good at performing classic pop songs from the 1980s and 90s. Among his followers, the middle-aged and elderly audiences stand out as the most active group, which is not the common stereotype of younger star-struck fans.

Luo loves the title bestowed by his fans. He views it as recognition of a gracious, accessible and grounded singer, which echoes his goal of serving the mass public with good music and helping people enjoy daily life.

"People in Shanghai are living good material lives, but I see higher expectations and cultural demands from them. For those without the time or opportunity to go to concerts or music festivals,

**Right and below:** Luo, a self-taught and licensed street artist, gives performances.



**Above:** Luo Xiaoluo sees fans follow his performances intently. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

street singing is a fantastic way to offer good live music. I feel honored to be in this role. It fills me with confidence, happiness, motivation and a sense of belonging," he says.

Luo tells China Daily that his fans are like family members. Many of them follow Luo and travel across the city, and sometimes even the nation. After the performances, they often stay to greet each other, casually chat, and take photos together, always showing kindness.

A loyal fan nicknamed Xiu says Luo's singing changed her life and made it more vibrant: "Because of Xiaoluo, I tried to learn how to sing and expanded my friend circle. I can't get enough of listening to his songs. They always accompany me while running and doing housework. He makes my lives fulfilled and happy."

With increasing exposure on social media and more performances across the nation, Luo is attracting more followers. Last month, Luo was invited to the Fudan University campus in Shanghai, where he shared his stories and transformed the charm of street art into academic lessons.

Luo has over 44,700 followers on an international social media platform, enabling them to catch a glimpse of China's street art and people's daily lives while enjoying beautiful melodies.

"Music is a universal language. I hope to present Chinese music and Chinese people's harmonious daily lives to the whole world. Foreign audiences may not understand the lyrics, but the melodies can transcend boundaries," says Luo. "When we perform at the (gate of) Jing'an Park, many foreign visitors will stop and listen."

Despite becoming a sensation on Shanghai's streets and on social media platforms, Luo remains humble. He tells China Daily that he cares little about the number of followers and has no big ambitions. Instead, he is happy to continue giving his best and sticking to his purpose of sharing good songs with more audiences.

"I do not see myself as an 'artist' and am not aiming to be one. I simply hope to enjoy music and life and, hopefully, better serve the public with good songs. Music is meaningless without an audience. My roots are in Shanghai's streets. The audience is the soil," he says.

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Street singer Luo Xiaoluo performs near Jing'an Park in Shanghai on April 10. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY



## Italian chef creates a culinary symphony using local ingredients

By HE QI  
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As the first blush of spring paints cities in soft hues, chef Niko Romito is once again redefining gastronomic borders at the Bvlgari Hotel Beijing and Shanghai. His latest spring menu, unveiled at the hotel's Il Ristorante - Niko Romito, is more than a seasonal offering, it's a testament to how fine dining can serve as a bridge between cultures, translating local ingredients into the universal language of flavor.

For Italian chef Romito, local ingredients are not mere commodities but dialects in a global culinary conversation.

This ethos is vividly expressed in dishes like Yellow Croaker with Artichokes and Mint in which China's prized yellow croaker — known for its delicate texture and light sweetness — meets Italy's artichokes, rendered in velvety purees and crispy textures. "When I discovered this fish, I immediately liked its taste and texture, and I wanted to combine it with the artichoke, widely used in Italy, especially in my region," he says.

The menu's Vegetable Lasagna with Spring Vegetables and Parmigiano Reggiano Sauce further illustrates this fusion.

Handmade pasta sheets, reflecting Romito's Abruzzese (in central Italy) heritage, embrace layers of spring vegetables such as asparagus and peas held together by a Parmigiano Reggiano sauce that balances richness with delicacy.

"Spring offers a great variety of delightful vegetables: asparagus, peas, basil, spinach, the first zucchini," Romito explains. While the team has been extensively researching local ingredients to blend Chinese elements with Italian tastes. "It's a journey through authentic spring flavors, but it also tells the dialogue we have with the country hosting Il Ristorante - Niko Romito," he adds.

At the heart of Romito's philosophy lies the belief that authenticity and innovation are not opposing forces but complementary notes in a culinary symphony.

"To be authentic, you must be respectful toward traditions; innovation doesn't mean destroying but to keep building on some solid bases, eliminating and improving what can be eliminated or improved, giving even more strength to the values of tradition," he says. "Gastronomy shouldn't transmit only our past but



Italian chef Niko Romito is redefining gastronomic borders in Shanghai with his latest spring menu (left and middle). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



also our present, and it can even anticipate the future."

Matthias Terretaz, general manager of the Bvlgari Hotel Shanghai says: "Our partnership with Romito is not only about cuisine, but about a shared vision of refined Italian lifestyle."

Romito's journey from a small trattoria in Abruzzo to global culinary prominence is as layered as his dishes. Growing up in a family of bakers and cheesemakers, he inher-

ited a reverence for simplicity.

"I have many memories of my father's pastry shop, but I also remember spending time with my grandfather, a true food lover who aged cheeses and cured meats in his cellar. This shaped my ideas and my taste for simple but excellent products," he recalls.

When fate intervened in 1999, Romito and his sister, then novices, took over their father's trattoria. What began as a temporary endeavor

evolved into a lifelong pursuit, driven by a curiosity for transforming traditional recipes through modern techniques. "I started by replicating Abruzzese classics, but my heart was filled with doubt," he says.

When not in the kitchen, Romito immersed himself in reading and learning. A pivotal moment came when he discovered *Vacuum: Cooking* by Joan Roca and Salvador Bru-gues, a book that introduced him to

avant-garde techniques. "I was filled with questions and sought answers in this book," he recalls.

His culinary journey was further shaped by two transformative internships — a month at the two-Michelin-starred (now three-star) Celler de Can Roca in Girona, Spain; and a stint at the two-Michelin-starred Caino in Tuscany, Italy. "These experiences opened my eyes to the possibilities of cooking," he says.

Over time, he deepened his study of ingredient-focused techniques, refining his creativity and developing a signature style rooted in purity and innovation.

"I've always loved using simple, common ingredients, not only because I love them but also because I believe that the role of the chef should be to make something extraordinary from the ordinary," he explains.

This philosophy extends to his worldwide Il Ristorante - Niko Romito empire, where menus adjust to local markets while retaining an Italian essence. In Tokyo, he explores *yuzu*, a citrus fruit; in Dubai, saffron and cardamom enrich his dishes; and in cities like Rome, Milan, Paris, and Shanghai, he continues to innovate.

## LIFE



From left: Founder of the Lucky Star shops Luo Liying (left) introduces products to visitors; Customers browse the donated secondhand goods at a Lucky Star shop; The shops are managed by individuals with autism. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Lucky Star shines in Xiamen

Shops designed to provide employment and teach young people with autism transferable skills, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

In three metro stations in Xiamen, Fujian province, you'll find tiny shops. Their doors have never closed, and they welcome any passerby to browse for books, toys, and other items.

They are the Xingyunxing (Lucky Star) Charity Goods Transfer Stations, and the three shops are mostly self-service. To make a purchase, customers simply look up the price and scan the code, particularly at night, when the shops are unattended.

While most of the products are secondhand, they are carefully taken care of and arranged. Run by the Xiamen Xingbaobei Children's Intelligence Development Center, the shops provide job opportunities to adults with autism spectrum disorders.

In the morning, an employee cleans the shops, disinfecting the products, and tidying up the shelves. In the afternoon, coaches from the center teach other students with autism how to manage the shops.

The first outpost opened last April and now manages to break even. This March, two new shops opened. Between them, they now have five full-time employees, and provide training opportunities to around 50 students.

Despite being seemingly low-maintenance and simple, the project has taken several years and countless trials and errors to reach this point, explains Luo Liying, founder of the center and of the shops.

"I've been working with autistic children for 24 years, and it's been 11 years since I set up the center. Some of the children have been with us since they were only 6 or 7 years old," she says.

"Now they have grown up, and it's unclear where they'll go next. So

I was really anxious to help them find employment."

She has adopted the methods espoused by Zhen Yuelai, a specialist in autism intervention and education, which holds that a main goal of autism intervention is to improve social functioning.

From an early age, children have been coming to Luo's center after school. There, they are taught how to integrate into different social environments — family, school and community. The final environment is the workplace, which is now supplemented by experience in the shops.

"We have compulsory education, but not compulsory employment. If young adults with autism don't start working and step back from society, they can easily backslide, which would be a great pity, as everything they have worked so hard for might then go to waste."

Luo experimented with different ideas before landing on the shops, but most proved to be failures. She even opened a restaurant, and thought that her students could work as dishwashers, but the facility required too much effort, and was soon running at a heavy loss.

Around five years ago, she thought of setting up a stall to sell donated goods. Her idea was supported by a local park. She wanted to illustrate to students the relationship between buying and selling, and show them they could make a living by selling things.

"When we actually set up the stall, we were shocked by how many things we had to learn. We thought managing one would be a simple task, but it turned out to involve many skills that needed to be developed," she says.

At first, the students had difficulty understanding some of the basic norms of interpersonal interaction.



Members from Xiamen Tax Service donate books to the shops.

For example, euphemistic ways of refusal, or appropriate social distance.

Luo describes the process as one of constantly finding, facing, and solving problems. She has filled an entire notebook with notes.

Seeing the progress made by the students over the years, she became increasingly certain that running a shop was the solution. Last year, with support from the Xiamen Disabled Persons' Federation and its subsidiary, the Xiamen Disabled Persons' Employment Service Center, the first shop was opened.

Whenever a donation is received, employees collect the goods from the donors' doorstep, and then sort, sanitize, price, and stock them by themselves.

For safety reasons, Luo always does a basic check on the donors in advance, and makes sure the employees go in pairs when picking up packages.

"An important reason this approach works is sustainability. What the students are learning is useful, like navigation, and communicating with others," she says.

"This is unlike the things we used to teach them, like handicrafts. Once they switch to a different place, such a skill might no longer be useful. Now, we teach them transferable skills. We really would like to think further ahead for them."

The mother of an employee known as Xiaoli wrote to Luo that:

"It hasn't been easy to come this far. Every bit of progress my child has made wouldn't have been possible without the guidance, support and care of the teachers. Thank you. This little shop is more than just a workplace for my child. It's a place where he is growing and realizing his worth."

The shops are also part of an initiative by the Xiamen Disabled Persons' Employment Service Center to help people with disabilities improve their living conditions, and integrate into society.

According to Chen Jun, director of the employment service, the center has supported the shops from the start by coordinating with the metro and property companies to

reduce rental costs, and by calling for communities and organizations to donate goods, and raising public awareness.

The center also offers Luo's organization professional guidance, and has helped them design an inclusive employment model for individuals with autism supported by different institutions, communities, and governmental policies.

"We position the shops as places that provide adaptive employment training for individuals with autism, helping them with social integration, vocational training, internship, and work opportunities," Chen says.

"The shops act not only as secondhand goods transfer stations, but also as transitional workplaces that prepare these young people for future employment and independent living."

Among people with cognitive and developmental disabilities, Luo says that it's particularly challenging for those with autism to find a job.

Through the shops, she has felt a sense of warmth and love, with support from the federation, parents and the broader community, companies donating bottled water, and benevolent individuals reaching out to give donations.

One donated more than 1,000 books, and just a few days ago, another individual donated some 70 pairs of new shoes. Luo is often to be found driving around to collect these larger donations, a busy life in which she takes delight.

"The fact that I am meeting kind people everyday gives me immense happiness, and allows me to be more and more confident in what we're doing," she says.

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## China's new geopark wins global recognition as it makes UN list

By LI YINGXUE  
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Where dinosaurs once roamed and ancient landscapes whisper stories from hundreds of millions of years ago, the Yunyang Geopark in southwestern China is a monument to the prehistoric past.

Its most famous feature — the Great Wall of Dinosaur Fossils — is an 18 km stretch of rock layers packed with fossils dating back nearly 170 million years that draws visitors into a world shaped by time, tectonics, and towering creatures.

Now, this remarkable park has earned international recognition. On April 17, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization officially announced that Yunyang has been added to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network — a major milestone in China's ongoing efforts to preserve its geological heritage and promote geotourism.

Yunyang joins the list alongside the Kanbula Geopark, located on the northeastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The two are among 16 new sites recognized this year. With their addition, China's total number of UNESCO Global Geoparks stands at 49, maintaining the country's position as the global leader in geopark designations.

Established in 2015, the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network highlights sites of international geological sig-



From left: Yunyang UNESCO Global Geopark is known for its dinosaur-rich fossil deposits; Yunyang On-site Dinosaur Fossil Protected Shelter in Yunyang county, Chongqing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

nificance that tell the story of Earth's history, evolution, and climate. With 16 new additions this year, the network now includes 229 geoparks around the globe.

"In 10 years, UNESCO Geoparks have become models for the conservation of geological heritage. But their role goes much further: they support educational projects, promote sustainable tourism and keep the knowledge and traditions of these territories alive through the active participation of local and indigenous communities," says UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

Officially designated the Yunyang

UNESCO Global Geopark, the site is within the Three Gorges Reservoir area in Yunyang county, Chongqing. Covering some 1,100 square kilometers, the geopark blends science education, folk culture, tourism, and ecology in a single destination.

It is home to landscapes formed nearly 250 million years ago, which capture the dramatic retreat of an ancient inland sea and the rise of a distinctive land-based ecosystem in its wake.

The region is renowned for its fossil deposits, and one exceptional area has revealed around 5,000 fossils, which have provided invaluable



insight into dinosaur evolution during the Middle Jurassic period.

The geopark is also home to stunning karst landscapes, limestone rock formations eroded by water over time. Among the natural wonders is one of the world's deepest sinkholes, which plunges 335 meters and is an important site for geological research.

Home to the Tujia ethnic group, Yunyang Geopark helps preserve local traditions like root carving and brocade weaving. It supports handicraft production, promotes cultural education in schools, and hosts events such as the Tujia Daughters'

Meeting, encouraging community participation and passing down heritage to younger generations.

"This is a valuable opportunity for Yunyang to step beyond Chongqing and reach national and international audiences," says Chen Daobin, Party Secretary of Yunyang county. "It will also enable us to participate more actively in global exchange, promote local agricultural and industrial products on a larger stage, attract new investment, and create more jobs."

Yunyang is accelerating efforts to create an international tourism and resort destination, with the number

of annual visitors projected to exceed 1.5 million by 2027.

"We aim to boost Yunyang's profile through the geopark, stimulate the local economy through consumer activity, drive popularity through events, highlight regional culture through food, and integrate urban and rural resources to showcase local charm," Chen says.

"Our goal is to develop the cultural tourism sector under an all-area, all-season, all-day, all-element, and all-industry model, to ensure local communities benefit from environmental preservation and tourism-driven development."

Xiong Yijun, an official with the Chongqing planning and natural resources bureau, highlighted the park's paleontological significance.

"The Middle Jurassic dinosaur fossil cluster in Yunyang fills a crucial evolutionary gap between the Lufengosaurus and Shunosaurus faunas, linking a key stage in Jurassic dinosaur evolution in Asia," Xiong says. "It's a major discovery of global relevance."

Looking ahead, Chongqing will continue to tap into its fossil heritage. "We plan to build a comprehensive conservation network that connects individual sites into a larger framework," Xiong adds.

"By integrating paleontology with cultural tourism, we plan to turn fossil resources into a new driver of regional economic growth."