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XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Nation's digital push gaining speed, edge

Boom of advanced technologies emerges as new engine driving economic growth

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's emphasis on accelerating the development of the digital economy and advancing the concept of "Digital China" will give the country a competitive edge in strategic emerging sectors and safeguard global security, said officials and experts.

Emphasizing that the boom of cutting-edge digital technologies has emerged as a new engine driving China's economic growth, they called for heightened efforts to push forward the construction of digital infrastructure, bolster the deeper integration of the real and digital economies, and promote technological innovation and the application of rapidly evolving artificial intelligence in a wider range of sectors.

When delivering a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Second World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, in December 2015, President Xi Jinping said that China is implementing the "Internet Plus" action plan and advancing the building of a "Digital China".

In a congratulatory letter sent to the first Digital China Summit, which opened in April 2018 in Fuzhou, Fujian province, Xi called for fostering new driving forces through informatization, in order to promote new development and make new achievements.

He emphasized that digitalization, networking and the application of intelligent technologies, which have been greatly developed, are playing increasingly important roles in promoting social and economic development, modernizing China's governance capacity, and meeting the people's ever-growing need for a better life.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the nation's efforts to construct a "Digital China". China's digital economy has gained strong momentum in recent years, with remarkable achievements made in fields such as artificial intelligence and integrated circuits.

The added value of core industries of the digital economy accounted for about 10 percent of GDP in 2024, while the total data output reached 41.06 zettabytes, marking a robust 25 percent year-on-year increase, according to the "Digital China Development Report 2024" released by the National Data Administration.

The report said the total scale of China's computing power reached 280 EFLOPS last year. EFLOPS is a unit of the speed of computer systems and is equal to 1 quintillion floating-point operations per second. Furthermore, it said, the country had built more than 4.25 million 5G base stations by the end of December.

"To accelerate the building of a 'Digital China', it is crucial to seize the unprecedented opportunities brought about by AI," said Liu Liehong, head of the NDA, at the recently concluded 8th Digital China Summit, highlighting the significance of advancing reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and implementing the AI Plus initiative.

Noting that data serves as a new type of production factor, Liu said that more efforts are needed to increase the supply of high-quality data, accelerate the integration of data elements with AI, technological innovation and industrial development and application, and press ahead with the construction of national computing power infrastructure.

He noted that new computing power in major computing hubs will account for more than 60 percent of the country's total by the end of this year, and called for cultivating a national integrated data market, establishing standards and systems for data circulation and transaction, and strengthening international cooperation in the digital economy domain.

Luo Zhongwei, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Industrial Economics, said, "Innovative digital technologies represented by AI, 5G, cloud computing and big data are currently finding a wide range of applications across various industries such as manufacturing, finance and healthcare, and speeding up their integration with the real economy."

Luo said that facilitating the development of the digital economy is of vital significance for nurturing new quality productive forces, propelling the intelligent transformation and upgrading of traditional industries and consolidating economic recovery momentum, in order to drive a shift from old growth drivers to new ones amid a volatile external environment and tariff pressures from the United States.

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Xi: China remains ideal destination for global investors

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has reiterated that China has been and will remain an ideal, secure and promising destination for foreign investors, as he recently replied to a letter from Simon Lichtenberg, founder of the Danish Chamber of Commerce in China.

Believing in China is believing in a better tomorrow, and investing in China is investing in the future, Xi said in the reply, which was published on Thursday.

He said that he appreciated Lichtenberg's deep affection for China

and the confidence of Danish enterprises in China regarding the country's future development.

Xi expressed his hope that the chamber, which was established in 1995, and its member enterprises will continue to play the role of a bridge between China and Denmark as well as between China and Europe.

He also encouraged them to make new contributions to enhance China-Denmark and China-Europe mutual understanding and friendship, as well as deepen China's mutually beneficial cooperation with Denmark and Europe.

In the letter to Xi, the founder of

the chamber, which was established in 1995, offered his congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Denmark and expressed the hope to continue deepening cooperation with China.

Denmark was the second Western country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Thursday that Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Lokke Rasmussen will make an official visit to China from Saturday to Tuesday.

Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a regular news briefing in Beijing that China-Denmark relations are developing with good momentum and close cooperation in trade and the economy, green development and innovation.

China is Denmark's largest trading partner in Asia and its second-largest overseas investor. In 2024, bilateral trade between China and Denmark reached \$15.46 billion, a year-on-year increase of 12.8 percent.

"Both sides are supporters of multilateralism and free trade, and have a broad consensus on climate change and other important issues," Lin said.

Making a debut



Giant panda He Feng gets up close with visitors on Wednesday during his public debut at the Schoenbrunn Zoo in Vienna, Austria. He Feng and his partner, Lan Yun, arrived at the zoo on April 23 for a decade-long stay as friendship envoys. Their arrival also marked the latest round of 10-year collaboration for giant panda conservation and research between China and Austria. LISA LEUTNER / REUTERS

Adversity propelling Chinese tech metamorphosis

History is replete with paradoxes where adversity births ingenuity. Napoleon's blockade of continental Europe catalyzed Britain's industrial revolution, and the Cold War space race gave rise to Silicon Valley. Today, the US-China tech rivalry — intensified by tariffs imposed by the administration of United States President Donald Trump — is scripting a similar paradox.

Recently, economist Jin Keyu's incisive analysis in the Financial Times posited that punitive tariffs, rather than crippling China, may accelerate its technological ascent. This thesis is not merely plausible, it is unfolding with striking vigor,



revealing the resilience of an economy transforming pressure into propulsion.

Jin's invocation of historical precedent is astute. When Napoleon sought to isolate Britain, he inadvertently spurred innovation in textiles and steam power. Similarly, the US' unilateral tariffs were once as much as 245 percent on certain Chinese goods. However, the measure did not kneecap the

Chinese economy, but redirected its trajectory.

According to the World Bank, China's research and development expenditure surged to 2.64 percent of its GDP in 2023 (\$461.87 billion), eclipsing the European Union's 2.2 percent and rivaling the US' 3.1 percent. This investment is strategic: 70 percent targets applied sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and semiconductors — areas where China aims to neutralize US sanctions.

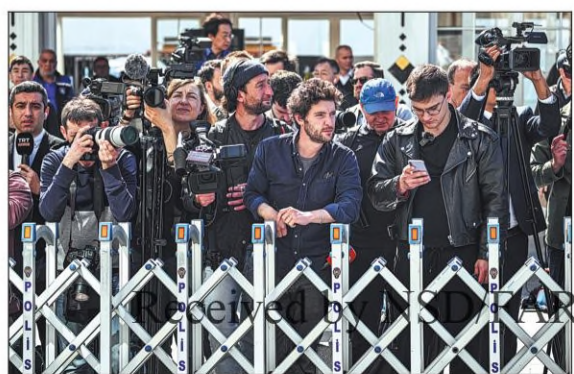
The semiconductor saga epitomizes this shift. Once dependent on US suppliers for 80 percent of high-end chips, China's SMIC and Hua

Hong Semiconductor now command 11 percent of global foundry revenue, doubling since 2020.

Sanctions forced a reckoning: China's domestic chip production hit 29.4 billion units in 2023, a 34 percent annual increase. Meanwhile, Huawei's 2023 Mate 60 Pro, powered by a 7-nanometer SMIC chip, symbolized defiance. Boston Consulting Group warns that China could control 21 percent of global semiconductor capacity by 2030, up from 15 percent today — a testament to the law of unintended consequences.

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Talks in Turkiye



Journalists gather on Thursday near the Turkish Presidency's Dolmabahce working office in Istanbul, ahead of the proposed Russia-Ukraine direct peace talks. Russian President Vladimir Putin's name was not on the list of Moscow's negotiating team. KIRILL ZYKOV / SPUTNIK See story, page 14

RISE IN SINGLE MOTHERS REFLECTS CHANGING FACE OF FAMILIES

More women choosing independence, self-determination over traditional expectations

By YU RAN for China Daily

Once defined by tradition, the concept of a modern family in China is evolving as more women choose to navigate life as single mothers, with independence as their compass.

Along the way they are redefining motherhood, balancing responsibility with freedom, and proving that fulfillment comes in many forms.



Four years ago, there were approximately 30 million single mothers in China, according to statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

In families in which the parents divorced, only one in six fathers

chooses to raise their children, meaning that 83 percent of these families are headed by single mothers, the data showed.

The rising divorce rate is largely driven by women's increasing self-awareness and emotional disconnection in the digital age, yet society's support for single mothers remains insufficient," said Li Jiao, a counseling psychologist.

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ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

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Almost two in three, or 64.6 percent, of single mothers are hesitant to disclose their single-parent status, according to the 2018 Living Conditions and Needs of Single Mothers in Ten Cities report. This is primarily due to concerns about being judged or criticized by those around them, the respondents said.

When it came to openly acknowledging that their children were from a single-parent family, 50.5 percent of single mothers worried that their child might be perceived as flawed, while 37.7 percent were concerned their child would be excluded by their classmates.

"Single mothers face several key psychological challenges after divorce: internalized self-doubt due to societal bias, emotional withdrawal from the loss of a partner, and deep guilt over their children's well-being," said Li.

She believes to better support single mothers post-divorce, society needs to redefine family norms, establish relevant community services, implement government-led psychological counseling hotlines, and introduce preventive interventions.

Seizing back control

Single mother Guo Jia, 40, is one of the legions of independent women challenging traditional stereotypes and forging their own paths.

She is not only the founder of Shomiu, a cultural communications company, but also the leader of Mei Club, a female club in Beijing.

Her transition from married life to an independent entrepreneur and single mother reflects women's changing perceptions about family, success, and self-worth in modern China.

Guo's decision to divorce in 2019 was not made lightly. She recalls weighing the "cost-effectiveness" of her marriage, realizing that while she had grown and evolved, her partner had remained stagnant. With differing values, she found herself unable to accept the status quo.

"I believe in aligning actions with beliefs. If our mindsets don't match, forcing it only leads to more pain," said Guo.

Post-divorce, Guo had to reconstruct her life financially and emotionally, and also as a mother to her now 8-year-old son.

She took her passion for women's empowerment and transformed it into a business. What started in 2017 as a personal quest, had by 2024 become a full-fledged operation with 80 employees.

Becoming a business leader was fueled by a strong sense of purpose, she said. "Freedom is not just a legal status; it's also a social and emotional state. The label of 'single mother' carries weight, but I see it as a badge of courage. It means I had the strength to walk away from a situation that no longer served me."

She acknowledges the challenges single mothers face. "People often assume we are struggling or pitiful, but I refuse to accept that narrative. I control my own life," said Guo.

Therapy and a strong support network have helped her, ensuring she remains mentally strong for herself and her child.

Guo's women's club, meanwhile, caters to women aged 30 to 45, whether single, married, or divorced. The goal is mutual support and growth.

"One member came to us devastated after her husband cheated and financially exploited her. Over time, she transformed

Single mothers: Complex women reject stereotypes



From left: Cheng Kaixi, Guo Jia and Chen Jing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

into a confident, independent woman. Watching her journey also made me stronger," said Guo.

The club provides networking, career development, and emotional support through events and mentorship. "It's not about rejecting men or marriage; it's about being independent enough to choose what's best for yourself," said Guo.

For her son, Guo aims to lead by example. She balances work and parenting, ensuring he spends time with both his parents while maintaining her own space.

Her ultimate message to other single mothers is one of self-love and resilience. She believes single mothers are not defined by their marital status but by their strength, ambition, and the lives they choose to build.

"Being a single mother is not a setback — it's a choice, a testament to strength, and a different way of living. We don't need to prove anything to the world; we just need to live fully, love ourselves, and show the next generation that independence and happiness can go hand in hand," said Guo.

Healthier apart

Cheng Kaixi, 37, a global marketing and communication professional for an advertising technology company based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, balances a high-pressure career with being a parent.

"The decision to end my eight-year marriage wasn't easy, but one moment stands out. I was picking up my husband's discarded laundry when I asked myself, 'Why do I still need this marriage? What is it truly bringing me?'" said Cheng.

She said, the traditional marriage model carried emotional and logistical burdens that extended beyond love, including caregiving, managing the household, and fulfilling societal expectations. Her ideal husband is a good partner, devoted father, and reliable provider.

"As I realized how absent he was in parenting, and our growing emotional distance, I understood that I didn't need the marriage to survive," said Cheng.

The hardest part was explaining the situ-

ation to her 11-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son.

"It was a delicate conversation. I wanted them to know that this wasn't about failure, but about creating a healthier life for all of us," said Cheng.

Surprisingly, leaving the marriage didn't require as much "rebuilding" as expected, as she had already shouldered most responsibilities on her own, she said. Yet, the financial strain grew as she became the sole provider for her daughter and aging parents. The boy is in the care of the father.

"Expenses like tuition fees, property costs, and daily needs increased. But rather than being burdened, I embraced the challenge. It taught me how strong and resilient I truly am," said Cheng.

She also believes in the importance of maintaining a sense of self. She is no longer just a mother consumed with the responsibilities of keeping the family together, but a woman who has embraced both independence and fulfillment, finding a balance between her personal and family life.

"Personal time is essential. I take at least half a day each weekend for myself — whether it's reading in a cafe, taking tennis lessons, or enjoying drinks with friends. These moments recharge me and help me remain a fulfilled person, not just a mother," said Cheng.

Despite her personal growth, she acknowledges the social stigma attached to single motherhood. Even her own mother hesitated about telling some relatives, as she was embarrassed and unsure how to explain the situation.

Her friends admire Cheng for her strength and the calm, the most energetic single mother they know.

Although she faces challenges, Cheng remains hopeful about starting a new relationship, and is open to remarriage.

"I have learned to communicate better and understand myself more deeply. I hope for a relationship that's mature, equal, and nurturing," said Cheng.

She believes that single mothers are not

fragments of a broken family, but a new definition of completeness, where love, strength, and an unyielding belief in the future are the foundations.

"Society needs to see us in our full complexity — we are professionals, caregivers, friends and individuals with dreams and ambitions. What we need is understanding and support — better child care policies, a fairer workplace, and more inclusive societal attitudes," she said.

Finding inner courage

Not all women find themselves on the path to single motherhood by choice. For some, divorce brings years of legal battles, emotional struggles, and the challenge of rebuilding both themselves and their family.

For Chen Jing, 43, her journey began over a decade ago. At the age of 33, she found herself in a marriage that no longer aligned with her personal values or aspirations. She had a growing realization that her relationship with her husband had stagnated, and they were no longer on the same path.

Chen yearned for growth — professionally, personally, and through new experiences. Their differing views on family priorities, parenting, and future goals, ultimately created an irreparable rift in their relationship.

The divorce, though painful, was the first step toward reclaiming her life. Like many single mothers, she worried about her child's well-being and the judgment she might face from society.

"At first, I feared that people would label me as a failure, seeing only the end of my marriage, not realizing the courage it took for me to make a choice for myself and my child. But eventually, I let go of that fear because I realized that to live authentically and pursue what was right for us, I needed to be free from those expectations," she said.

Chen knew that rebuilding her life was essential, not just for her, but for her child. Financial independence became a priority, and she excelled in her human resources career at a Fortune 500 company.

Through therapy, introspection, and working on herself, she also regained her confidence and realized her true worth.

"I used to believe that I was broken, but through this journey, I learned I was a fighter," said Chen.

In 2021, Chen remarried and gave birth to a second son. Her goal to take her children abroad became a reality, and the family moved to various countries, including North America, Europe, and Africa. These international experiences shaped her perspective on parenting and education, and she now emphasizes the values of independence, resilience, and cultural appreciation in raising her children.

Earlier this year, Chen became a certified relationship coach after taking a course on relationship culture.

She now works to empower women, especially single mothers, to understand their worth, set healthy boundaries, and design lives that reflect their true desires. "The more I worked on myself, the more I realized that my purpose was to help others discover their own strength," said Chen.

Marriage registrations fall

The changes to family structures, particularly an apparent reluctance to marry, are reflected in civil affairs data compiled in recent years.

In 2024, there were 6.11 million marriage registrations and 2.62 million divorce registrations nationwide, according to Ministry of Civil Affairs statistics.

This compares with 7.68 million marriages and 2.59 million divorces in 2023. The year-on-year changes represent a 20.5 percent drop in marriages and a 1.08 percent increase in divorces.

In the first quarter of this year, there were 1.81 million marriage registrations and 630,000 divorce registrations, with the number of marriage registrations further declining compared to the first quarter of 2024, according to the latest data from the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Gu Xiaodan, a lawyer at Shanghai Golden Trust Law Firm, has extensive experience in family law and has witnessed firsthand the hurdles faced by single mothers. With the increasing divorce rate, single motherhood is no longer seen as unusual, she said.

"One of the biggest challenges single mothers face is the inadequate enforcement of child support rulings," Gu said.

"Marriage laws today focus more on protecting original assets and the rights of minors, rather than solely emphasizing traditional family structures," said Gu, who has observed a shift in how courts handle divorce cases, reflecting broader societal changes in attitudes toward single mothers.

While acknowledging progress has been made, Gu stressed there is still room for improvement.

"The law provides a framework for justice, but true support comes from the community. More initiatives — such as accessible legal aid, counseling services, and workplace policies that accommodate single parents — are needed to truly empower single mothers," she said.

Ultimately, Gu believes that single mothers should not just be seen as individuals in need of legal protection but as strong, independent women who deserve recognition and support. "Divorce is not the end of stability — it can be the beginning of a new, self-determined chapter," she said.

Contact the writer at sunnyu923@163.com

TOP NEWS

Strategy: Bigger push urged for innovation

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In February 2023, China unveiled a plan for the overall layout of its digital development, vowing to make important progress in the construction of a "Digital China" by 2025, with effective interconnectivity in digital infrastructure, a significantly improved digital economy and major breakthroughs in digital technological innovation. By 2035, the nation is expected to be at the global forefront of digital development.

"As a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation is evolving, promoting the in-depth integration of digital technologies with the real economy is a necessary requirement for establishing a modern industrial system and a strategic choice of forging new competitive advantages on the global stage," said Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy.

The move to develop the digital economy is conducive to enhancing the resilience of industrial and supply chains, advancing new industrialization and realizing Chinese modernization, Pan said.

He added that a bigger push is needed to reinforce the dominant position of enterprises in boosting sci-tech advancements, increase financial support for innovation-oriented tech companies, and strengthen the training of high-caliber talent.

Wu Jianping, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said the emergence of state-of-the-art digital technologies has laid a solid foundation for unleashing the value of massive data elements, which underscores the significance of safeguarding data security, a prerequisite to ensuring the orderly development of the data industry.

AI seen as key

AI, which has entered a stage of explosive growth, is spearheading the development of the digital economy and is being integrated into every facet of industrial revolution and people's lives.

Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Chinese tech giant Baidu Inc, said that the application of AI technology is reshaping the industrial landscape and will be a transformative force that revolutionizes development over the next 40 years.

Li said the goal of the intelligent transformation of industries and society through AI is to fulfill people's needs—making technology meaningful only if it serves humanity by creating more value and contributing to society.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of Chinese internet enterprise 360 Security Group, said: "Looking ahead, the growth potential of China's economy will come from industrial upgrading driven by technological innovation, while AI represented by large language models will give birth to new production and business models in traditional fields such as manufacturing, agriculture and services, creating more social value."

Zhou said 360 Security Group will focus on digital security and AI, adding that it is important to promote the digital transformation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as they face mounting pressure from a shortage of capital, talent and technology.

Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy Roland Berger, said, "China has made rapid progress in the development of AI technology, becoming one of the global leaders, and the pace will further accelerate. AI will unlock massive opportunities for our business."

Foreign companies can play a bigger role in supporting China's transformation in fields such as decarbonization and the digitalization of industrial and supply chains, he added.

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Visitors look at a golden mask at an exhibition themed on China's ancient Shu civilization at a museum in Athens, Greece, on Tuesday. The exhibition is showcasing Sanxingdui and Jinsha cultures through artifacts, 3D printing technology and graphic displays. XINHUA

US curbs on Chinese chips slammed

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China will take firm measures to safeguard the legitimate interests of its companies, following the United States' latest attempt to block the global use of Huawei Technologies' Ascend artificial intelligence chips, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday.

At a weekly news briefing in Beijing, ministry spokeswoman He Yongqian said the latest US announcement to tighten export controls on Chinese chip products is a typical example of unilateral bullying, exposing the protectionist and unilateral nature of its trade policy.

The ministry's remarks followed guidance issued by the US Department of Commerce on Tuesday, stating that the use of Huawei's chips "anywhere in the world" would breach US export controls, marking an escalation in its efforts to hinder China's technological advancement.

The spokeswoman said the US, by citing unfounded accusations to justify further restrictions, has seriously undermined the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese businesses, threatened the stability of global semiconductor supply chains, and disrupted market rules as well as the international economic and trade order. Such actions harm long-term, mutually beneficial and sustainable cooperation between companies in

both countries, she added.

China's foreign trade in chip products reached \$129.5 billion in the first quarter of 2025, up 5.5 percent year-on-year, while its exports amounted to \$40.99 billion, surging 10.9 percent year-on-year, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

The Ministry of Commerce also called on the US to end its Section 232 tariffs on imported automobiles, steel and aluminum, as well as its investigation into imported pharmaceuticals, stressing that such issues can be resolved through dialogue.

China considers this type of tariffs and related probes to be unilateral and protectionist in nature, harming other countries, eroding global trade norms and ultimately offering limited benefits to US industries, said He.

Following the joint statement released on Monday after the high-level China-US talks in Geneva, China paused measures on Wednesday that added 11 US companies to its unreliable entity list on April 4 and six others on April 9, the ministry said in a statement. Chinese businesses are now able to apply for approval to resume transactions with these companies during the 90-day suspension period.

Shi Xianjin, an assistant researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said the temporary suspension allows

Chinese companies to resume business activities with affected US entities, helping to minimize disruptions to supply chains and commercial partnerships.

This pragmatic step underscores China's broader commitment to maintaining open markets, reducing trade friction and addressing specific concerns through consultation rather than confrontation, said Shi.

In addition, China also temporarily lifted export control measures that had placed 28 US entities on its export control list. Starting on Wednesday, the suspension will remain in effect for 90 days, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In the meantime, exporters seeking to ship dual-use items to these entities must apply to the ministry in accordance with relevant regulations.

The trade relationship between China and the US is shaped by fundamental economic dynamics, rather than being deliberately guided by China, said Wang Qian, a researcher specializing in international trade at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics.

"Given the scale, depth and breadth of China-US economic ties, differences are inevitable," said Wang. "However, such issues should be addressed through equal dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation. Unilateral measures not only fail to resolve problems, but may also escalate tensions."

Taiwan not approved for WHO assembly

By WANG QINGYUN
wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

China has decided not to approve the Taiwan region's participation in the 78th World Health Assembly, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday in response to reports that the region has again failed to receive an invitation to the gathering this year.

The Taiwan region's participation in events of international organizations, including the World Health Organization, must follow the one-China principle, which is also a fundamental principle confirmed by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly Resolution 25.1, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Thursday.

"China's Taiwan region, unless given approval by the central govern-

ment, has no basis, reason or right to participate in the WHA," Lin told a regular news conference.

Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities have adhered obstinately to a "Taiwan independence" separatist position, making the political foundation for the region to participate in the WHA no longer exist, he added.

China's disapproval aims to safeguard the one-China principle and uphold the seriousness and authority of the UNGA and WHA resolutions, Lin added.

The 78th WHA is set to open in Geneva on Monday and last for nine days.

For some time, the DPP authorities and a handful of countries have attempted to reverse the course of history blatantly, distorted UNGA Resolution 2758 on purpose and attempted to challenge the one-Chi-

na principle, Lin said.

"They are essentially trying to challenge not only China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also international justice and prevailing consensus as well as the post-war international order," he said.

China's decision to not approve the Taiwan region's participation has gained wide understanding and support from the international community, which shows that commitment to the principle is where global opinion trends, and the arc of history bends, Lin said.

The spokesman also warned the DPP authorities against "Taiwan independence" moves.

"No matter what the DPP authorities say or do, it does not change the fact that Taiwan is part of China, nor can it stop the trend toward China's ultimate and inevitable reunification," Lin said.

Envoy calls for deeper sci-tech bonds with UK

Development and governance of AI require international efforts, he says at London forum

By XING YI in London
xingyi@chinadaily.com.cn

Inside yuan (\$83.25 billion) in 2024.

China and the United Kingdom should continue science and technology exchanges, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, without overstretching the concept of national security, China's Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang said at a forum in London on Wednesday.

Addressing the 2025 Sino-UK Entrepreneur Forum, which was themed "Smart Decisions for Smart Technologies", Zheng said China's AI development has been expanding in scale and flourishing in innovation, with ever-increasing real-life applications, and that China welcomes international collaboration on this emerging technology.

Noting that China sent a delegation to the UK's AI Safety Summit in 2023, and the UK participated in a meeting on international cooperation on AI capacity-building hosted by China early in May, Zheng said, "We would welcome the UK sending a senior delegation to the upcoming AI conference in Shanghai."

The World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting for Global AI Governance will be held in Shanghai in July. Its 2024 edition saw more than 1,300 influential figures from over 50 countries attend the event.

The development and governance of AI require international cooperation, the ambassador said, adding that for further exchanges and collaboration, it is important to correct "misconceptions about China and get rid of political interference."

"Some in the UK continue to view China through an outdated lens. They hold on to their ideological biases, overstretch the concept of national security, and try to disrupt China-UK sci-tech exchanges," Zheng said.

"It must be pointed out that both countries have a solid sci-tech foundation and enjoy unique strengths. We can very well learn from each other," he added.

According to the China Internet Network Information Center, China is home to more than 4,500 AI-related enterprises, with the core AI industry valued at nearly 600 billion

Comment, page 11 Chinese entities accounted for more than 61 percent of global AI patent applications, the National Intellectual Property Administration said at a news conference in April.

The National Development and Reform Commission said in March that new industries, business formats and digital models contributed over 18 percent to China's GDP.

"As we speak, changes unseen in a century keep accelerating and the new round of sci-tech revolution is booming. ... At the same time, unilateralism, trade bullying and tariff war run rampant. International sci-tech cooperation faces unprecedented disruptions," said Zheng.

Jointly hosted by China Daily Europe and the London-based 48 Group, which promotes trade and business cooperation between the UK and China, the forum gathered nearly 200 participants from the British government, financial, trade, science and education sectors.

Jack Perry Jr, chairman of the 48 Group, said: "We already see what collaboration can look like. BYD is leading in electric mobility. Alibaba Cloud is building smart infrastructure. And Octopus Energy, represented here today by Greg Jackson, is using AI to transform clean energy systems."

Perry said he will lead a group of British companies to visit Beijing and the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang this month. "Our focus is clear. To build real partnerships in AI, predictive logistics, smart agriculture, and energy systems that will shape the next two decades," he said.

Sun Shangwu, deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily, said China Daily has closely tracked the development of global AI trends long before it became the current buzzword.

"Around the world, the AI landscape is blossoming with diversity. The flourishing of various models and applications proves that open collaboration is not just an ideal — they are the smart decision for the development of these smart technologies," said Sun.



Zheng Zeguang, Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom, delivers a speech on Wednesday during the 2025 Sino-UK Entrepreneur Forum in London. The forum, coorganized by China Daily Europe and the 48 Group, was themed "Smart Decisions for Smart Technologies". YANG CHUNYA / CHINA DAILY

Tech: Digital economy serving as catalyst for China's growth

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China's AI Plus initiative, which was launched in 2024, aims to embed AI across industries, from agriculture to fintech. Startups such as DeepSeek and SenseTime now rival OpenAI in parameter scale, with DeepSeek's models deployed in 15 countries. In quantum computing, China leads in photonic qubits, achieving a 255-photon quantum advantage in 2023. Such strides are bolstered by State-industry symbiosis, as 40 percent of China's AI patents originate from private firms, a deliberate pivot from State-led monopolies.

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share, it grew 12 percent year-on-year, driven by cloud computing (Alibaba Cloud, Tencent) and fintech (Ant Group).

As physical supply chains fragment, the digital ones consolidate. China's cross-border e-commerce hit 2.3 trillion yuan (\$319 billion) in 2023, with Shein and Temu redefining global retail. The "Digital Silk Road" now links over 100 countries, a parallel to Elon Musk's Starlink, but with geopolitical heft.

The US misapprehends and grossly underestimates China's adaptive capacity. The CHIPS and Science Act's \$52 billion subsidy pales next to China's \$150 billion semiconductor fund. Restricting

the export of Dutch semiconductor giant ASML's extreme ultraviolet lithography machines to China merely delayed, not derailed, China's chip ambitions.

Meanwhile, the US' AI lead is narrowing. China produces 40 percent of AI research papers globally compared with 35 percent for the US, according to Stanford's AI Index. In green tech, China's \$546 billion investment dwarfs the US' \$141 billion, cementing its renewable energy hegemony.

The tariff war's legacy may be a world bifurcated into tech spheres, yet interdependent. China's rise isn't zero-sum; its market absorbs 33 percent of global chips, 50 per-

cent of EVs and 70 percent of solar panels.

The challenge for the West is to compete without containment, recognizing that innovation thrives not in isolation but in the friction of rivalry. As economist Jin astutely observes, the Trump administration's tariffs may yet be remembered not as a check on China, but as the crucible that forged China's technological metamorphosis. In this high-stakes game, adversity is the mother of ascension.

The author is an economics and politics analyst, award-winning columnist of Philippine Star and Abante newspapers, book author and moderator of the Pandesal Forum. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Intl service trade fair to open in September

By DU JUAN
dujuan@chinadaily.com.cn

The 2025 China International Fair for Trade in Services will open on Sept 10 at Beijing's Shougang Park, where about 200 achievements are expected to be showcased, a senior official said on Thursday.

Starting this year, the fair will be held annually on the second Wednesday of September at the park in Beijing's Shijingshan district, said Zhao Qizhou, director of the Beijing International Trade in Services Center, at a news conference.

"Companies such as Alibaba, Schneider, KPMG and GE Healthcare have already applied to present their digital, green and smart products and achievements at this year's fair," Zhao said.

Over 30 countries and regions, including Norway and Japan, as well as international organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, have expressed interest in participating, he added. The event, which was first held in 2012, will run for five days this year and will feature both themed and special exhibitions.

The themed section will host guest countries, guest provinces, international organizations and key nations, with Australia set to serve as the guest country. Australia is assembling the largest delegation in the fair's history.

"Australia is working with its partners to bring nearly 60 companies and institutions as part of its exhibition delegation. They will set up a 360-square-meter booth, the largest among all previous guest countries in both size and number of participants," Zhao said.

Australia also plans to present a "Chimney Light Show" and immersive cultural experiences at Shougang Park, along with business receptions and interactive events to promote integration across culture, commerce, tourism and sports.

Anhui province, as the guest province, will highlight its latest developments in technological innovation and the service industry.

The special exhibitions will focus on integrated development in services trade, featuring nine themed areas including telecommunications, computing and information services, financial

services, cultural tourism and education. New technologies such as digital tools and artificial intelligence will be showcased for their role in advancing the sector.

Organizers will also enhance the fair's digital platform and ticketing services this year, introducing a smart assistant powered by the DeepSeek model to offer bilingual Q&A and personalized services.

Previously held at both the China National Convention Center and Shougang Park, the event will now be held solely at Shougang Park starting this year.

A 3-square-kilometer area in the park, which used to be a major steel plant, is being transformed into an industrial-themed exhibition town. Organizers said the venue will offer a garden-style exhibition space this year, combining modern pavilions with preserved industrial relics.

Yu Jie, deputy mayor of Shijingshan district, said the district has launched studies and planning for the park's northern zone, aiming to build permanent venues and support facilities to establish Shougang Park as a multifunctional "exhibition town" with integrated spaces for exhibitions, leisure, shopping and accommodation.

"We welcome top domestic and international exhibition organizers and professional service agencies to join in planning, promoting and designing the 'exhibition town' project," Yu said.

This year's conference space will total about 18,100 square meters to meet the needs of forums and other events, said Jiang Nan, deputy general manager of Shougang Group Co.

"We will construct a garden-style exhibition space this year," Jiang said, highlighting the combination of industrial heritage and natural landscapes.

The exhibition space will include themed venues, public service areas, green zones and flexible open spaces designed to foster a modern yet historically grounded environment.

As a leading global event for the services trade, CIFTIS offers companies around the world a platform to showcase their capabilities and explore collaboration opportunities.

18-year-old honored for saving classmate's life

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

Jiang Zhaopeng, an 18-year-old medical student, faced a life-or-death test on Saturday — not in an exam hall, but in the backseat of a car, where he performed life-saving CPR on a classmate who went into cardiac arrest.

Jiang and his classmate were heading to take the spring college entrance exam when the emergency unfolded unexpectedly. Both attend Shandong City Service Technician College in Yantai, a coastal city in Shandong province.

At about 8:10 am, the two boarded a ride-hailing car bound for the testing site. Just a minute later, Jiang's classmate collapsed onto his lap, showing signs of a heart attack, seizure and cardiac arrest.

"I thought he was just tired at first," Jiang said. But then the classmate began gasping and convulsing, violently kicking the front seat before suddenly going limp. He soon stopped breathing.

Drawing on first aid skills learned in school, Jiang quickly sprang into action. He laid his classmate flat and began performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, alternating with rescue breathing.

"Go to the hospital," Jiang told the driver, Wang lao.

Wang alerted the local traffic police and sped to the hospital, running six red lights and arriving in just seven minutes — half the usual time.

Only after ensuring his classmate was under professional care

did Jiang notify school officials about the emergency situation. He then rushed to the exam site, but arrived too late to take the 9 am Chinese language test.

Doctors later confirmed that Jiang's classmate would recover without brain damage.

"The first four minutes of CPR in the car were absolutely vital," said Yang Haiyan, head of the emergency department at the East Hospital of Yantai Hospital.

"The patient received 29 minutes of resuscitation in the hospital and eight defibrillations before his heartbeat stabilized at 8:50 am," Yang said.

Though he missed the exam, Jiang said he has no regrets about his decision.

"Exams can be retaken, but a life cannot," he said.

The story quickly went viral after it was shared online, drawing widespread praise from netizens.

"Without Jiang and the driver Wang, our child wouldn't have survived the 40-minute cardiac arrest," the survivor's parents wrote in the comment section of the video.

Four days after the incident, education authorities arranged a make-up exam with a backup test paper for Jiang.

"I'm so grateful for this make-up exam," he said.

The spring college entrance exam is a crucial opportunity for vocational school students like Jiang to pursue higher education. Both Jiang and Wang have received official commendations from Yantai's local authorities and were honored as model individuals for their actions. They have also been recommended as candidates for the "China Good Person List" for the second quarter of 2025.

Back in its nest

While on patrol, a worker returns a red-crowned crane chick that had fallen into the water nearby to its nest at the Zhalong National Nature Reserve in Heilongjiang province on Wednesday. During this breeding season, the reserve has recorded 15 pairs of free-range red-crowned cranes nesting, laying eggs and hatching 24 chicks. So far, 14 chicks of the chicks have survived.

GUO JUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Guideline to regulate use of artificial intelligence in schools

Educators, parents urged to ensure age-appropriate utilization of new tools

By ZOU SHUO
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Primary school students in China are prohibited from independently using artificial intelligence tools that generate open-ended content, while educators must ensure that AI can complement but not replace human-led teaching, according to a new guideline issued on Monday by the Ministry of Education.

The 2025 edition of the guideline, released by the ministry's committee on basic education teaching guidance, sets standards for the use of generative AI in primary and secondary schools. It emphasizes age-appropriate use, risk prevention and ethical considerations as AI tools such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek are gaining momentum in classrooms.

The guideline aims to standardize the ethical and appropriate use of generative AI while addressing concerns such as privacy risks, academic integrity and overreliance on technology.

Under the guideline, primary school students are not allowed to independently use open-ended AI content generators, which could allow them to use AI to do their assignments for them. Middle school students may explore the logical structure of AI-generated content, while high school students are permitted to engage in inquiry-based learning that involves understanding AI's technical principles.

A senior official with the committee said the restrictions are meant to ensure age-appropriate use of AI and prevent younger students from becoming overly dependent on the technology.

Students are also banned from submitting AI-generated content as original work, using AI to cheat or relying too heavily on the technology for creative tasks without applying critical thinking abilities.

The guideline tasks educational authorities with formulating localized AI management policies, establishing data protection rules, launching ethical review mecha-

nisms and creating dynamic "whitelists" of approved AI tools. The document underscores the importance of balancing technological innovation with students' cognitive development and maintaining human-centered pedagogy.

Teachers are required to ensure that AI plays only a supplementary role in education. Direct use of AI for evaluating students, answering exam questions or processing sensitive data — such as personal information — are strictly prohibited.

Schools are urged to adopt differentiated AI strategies, avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and strengthen data security measures. The guideline also advises parents to supervise their children's AI use, protect their personal information and prioritize emotional engagement over reliance on technology.

The document outlines plans to establish a tiered AI education system covering all levels of primary and secondary education. Students will progress from basic cognitive understanding in primary school to deeper analysis in middle school and applied innovation in high school.

"AI is a strategic technology driving a new wave of technological and industrial transformation," a senior ministry official said. "It has already reshaped everyday life and set education on a new course of reform and development."

The official said developing AI education in elementary and secondary schools is essential to align with global technological trends, support national development and cultivate future innovation talent.

At the primary level, the focus will be on fostering interest and offering hands-on AI experiences. In middle school, students will delve into AI logic and problem-solving, gaining theoretical and practical understanding. At the high school level, students will apply what they've learned to design and optimize AI models while developing interdisciplinary and systems-level thinking.

The guideline also offers examples of how generative AI can enhance education. For students, AI can enable personalized learning, interactive inquiry and deeper reading comprehension. It can also provide mental health support and help students with special needs overcome learning barriers.

For teachers, AI can assist in lesson planning, classroom instruction, tutoring and research, helping improve efficiency and resource use through data analysis and content generation. School administrators can use AI for document drafting, data processing and decision-making to improve governance and operations.

The ministry said it will increase investment in AI education infrastructure and gradually establish AI education bases in primary and secondary schools. It also plans to offer more training programs for teachers to improve their understanding and use of AI tools.

Support for rural schools will be strengthened, the official said, with greater teacher exchanges and resource sharing aimed at bridging the AI education gap between urban and rural areas.

Yu Dongdong, the mother of a sixth-grade student in Beijing, said she began restricting her son's use of Doubao, ByteDance's large language model, after noticing how advanced his AI-assisted essays had become.

"The essays were based on his real experiences, but they had such clear themes, beautiful language and perfect structure that frightened me a little," she said. "They didn't sound like something a child of his age could write."

Yu said her son cannot use AI-generated content during school tests, and she feared the tool might make him lazy. She now encourages him to write his own essays first, then compare them with AI-generated versions and learn from the differences.

"This way, he keeps the human side — his flaws, his innocence," she added.



Students use AI tools to modify their essays at a primary school in Nantong, Jiangsu province, on April 28. ZHAI HUIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Experts stress role of critical thinking in education

By ZHAO YIMENG and LIU KUN in Wuhan

As artificial intelligence rapidly transforms education and the workplace, college students must master new skills to thrive in a world increasingly driven by intelligent machines, experts said on Thursday during the ongoing 2025 World Digital Education Conference in Wuhan, Hubei province.

Jacques Fremont, president and vice-chancellor of the University of Ottawa, called AI a "double-edged sword" that challenges educators to ensure students retain the ability to think independently.

"If people stop thinking for themselves and always rely on machine-generated knowledge, they will not learn how to think," he said.

Fremont emphasized the importance of critical thinking and valuing information integrity.

"They need to assess the quality and veracity of the information generated by AI tools," he said, adding that students' autonomous judgment will be key to the future of education and science.

John Hoppercroft, a Turing Award laureate and professor emeritus at Cornell University, said education systems must adapt to a future in which automation may replace many jobs.

"We are entering an information age where only a small fraction of the population may be needed to produce goods and services," he said.

Hoppercroft said education must focus on producing quality talent capable of transitioning into the era of intelligence. He cited "educability" — the uniquely human capacity to learn and evolve — as a core advantage over other species.

"Helping students discover what

they enjoy and encouraging them to pursue it will be critical," he said.

Zhang Pingwen, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and president of Wuhan University, stressed the importance of building digital capabilities.

"With powerful new tools, what matters most is how well students can use them," Zhang said. "Data is only valuable in the hands of those with the skills to apply it. Otherwise, it becomes a burden."

He said universities must go beyond traditional knowledge transmission to prioritize the cultivation of values, problem-solving abilities and digital literacy.

"How students formulate questions when using AI tools is itself a deep skill," Zhang said. "Education must keep pace with new technologies."

China's Education Minister Huai

Jinpeng, in a keynote speech at the conference, said it is essential to guide students in the responsible use of AI.

"We need to promote the integration of AI courses across primary, secondary and higher education, and accelerate the development of core AI textbooks and learning resources," Huai said.

He also called for strengthening the regulatory framework around AI tools to ensure data security and personal privacy, while effectively preventing misinformation, algorithmic bias and AI hallucinations.

Contact the writers at
zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn



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'Spidermen' keep tourist attraction clean

Rappelling cleaners brave heights to scour Huangshan Mountain for trash and lost items



Li Peisheng rappels down a cliff to collect trash on Huangshan Mountain. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By CHENG SI
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

China has its own "spidermen" in Huangshan, Anhui province, whose mission is not to save the world, but to collect trash from mountaintops or pick up cellphones dropped by travelers.

Li Peisheng, 51, is one of the 18 spidermen who rappel down Huangshan Mountain, one of China's top tourism destinations, to keep the UNESCO World Heritage Site clean.

Famous for peculiarly-shaped peaks, pine trees and views of clouds, the mountain range includes three of the scenic area's tallest and best-known peaks — Lotus Peak (1,864 meters), Bright Peak (1,860 meters) and Capital of Heaven Peak (1,830 meters).

Working for Huangshan Tourism Development Co, Li was among the 1,670 national model workers honored this year for his devotion and pursuit of fine workmanship.

Li first worked as a ticket collector at the scenic spot in 1997 before becoming one of its rappelling cleaners in 1999.

"I was afraid to rappel at first. I still remember the location was over 50

meters high — a building with dozens of floors — and I was trembling at the time. I bundled up my courage and went down attached to a rope after a long hesitation," he said. "But I hit the rocks, which hurt!"

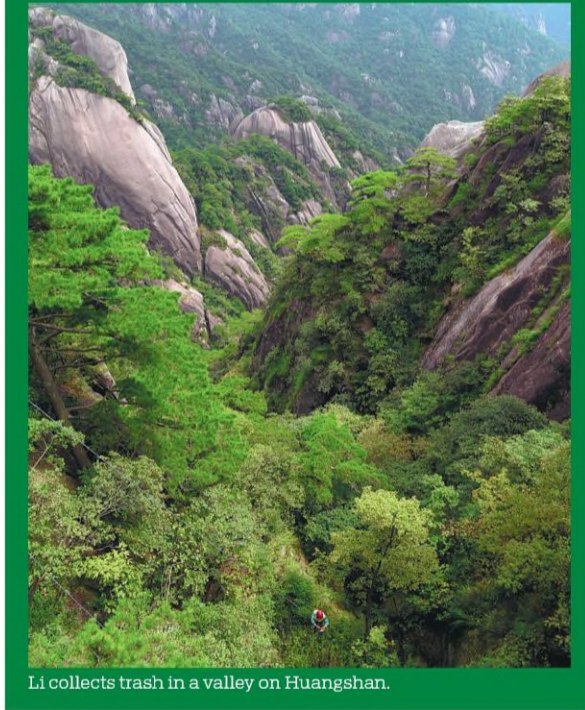
He didn't give up, and figured out ways to keep himself balanced.

"The locations where trash has fallen on are cliffs or in brambles," he said. "A Chinese proverb says, 'It is easier to climb up a mountain than to go down a mountain,' while for us, it's much harder to climb up. We need to hold the body using the strength of one single arm when climbing up, and use another hand to manage the rope in case it tangles with bushes or other things."

"My family members didn't know about my job at the beginning, and they heard about my work through some news reports. They persuaded me to transfer to other positions but I convinced them with my skills and good performance," he said, adding that the standard for becoming a rappelling cleaner is strict, requiring a strong awareness of safety, responsibility and good health without underlying conditions or heart disease.



Li (left) and his partner, Wang Nianfeng, walk a trail on Huangshan.



Li collects trash in a valley on Huangshan.

Safety is their top priority, so they usually work in pairs, with one responsible for watching and maintaining safety, while the other collects trash. "My first partner was Xie Tianxing. He is the same age as me and we worked as a pair for seven to eight years from 1999. We were a perfect team as we knew each other's ideas just through eye contact."

Li's current partner, Wang Nianfeng, is also the same age and they have worked together since 2022.

His work also includes being an emergency rescuer and guide.

"We workers at Huangshan all have these responsibilities and are jack-of-all-trades," he said.

In 2022, Li established a workshop at the foot of Lotus Peak after he and his colleague Hu Xiaochun, a guardian of Huangshan's 10-meter tall, 1,300-year-old "Guest-Greeting Pine", received a letter on Aug 13 from President Xi Jinping.

In the letter, Xi praised their long and dedicated efforts keeping the mountain clean and tending to the "Guest-Greeting Pine", a key feature of Huangshan Mountain Scenic Area.

Li said that the workshop is a place for cleaners to rest and communi-

cate, as well as a dispatch station to send out cleaners or help travelers to pick up personal belongings dropped on the cliffs.

"Huangshan scenic area received about 800,000 tourist visits annually about 20 years ago. At that time, we used to rappel seven to eight times a day or even 10 times to pick up trash. In recent years, tourist visits have reached about 4.5 million per year, but we rappel four or five times a day, and seven or eight times a day during peak tourist seasons, which means that the public has increased its awareness of protecting the environment," he said.

"Some young adults use plastic bags to collect their own trash and take it away with them. I remember a mother telling her child not to litter after seeing us rappel to pick up trash. The job is meaningful, and I'm very happy to see more people become aware of protecting Huangshan."

"We safeguard the mountains and rivers to safeguard the future for the younger generations. I will continue to protect the beauty and cleanness of Huangshan and let more travelers experience its charming natural views," he said.



Li prepares to rappel down a cliff with Wang Nianfeng's assistance.



Li returns to his dormitory after a day's work on Huangshan Mountain.

Deliveryman recognized as model worker for dedication to customers

By CHENG SI
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

Wan Haibo, who works at a ZTO Express station in Tianjin, was honored as a national model worker this year for his accurate delivery work and active involvement in voluntary services and grassroots governance.

Wan, 43, was among the 1,670 exemplary individuals honored on April 28 by President Xi Jinping at a gathering to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in Beijing. In response to receiving the accolade, Wan said, "I feel very excited and proud."

Last year, he was granted the May 1 Labor Medal by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions recognizing

his good work performance.

Born in the countryside in Handan, Hebei province, Wan decided to make a living outside his hometown and became a deliveryman in Tianjin in 2018.

"There is no shortcut for success. Every parcel means responsibility and trust, so it's necessary to send it accurately to the customer in time," he told news outlet Beijing Daily. "The job is laborious and toilsome, experiencing sunburn and wind. I thought about stopping, but finally got through the difficulties."

The gated residential community Wan is currently responsible for has 23 buildings with about 4,000 residents and some 30 stores, posing a heavy daily workload.

He said he usually delivers 500 parcels per day, but the workload



Wan Haibo works at a ZTO Express station in Tianjin. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

increases to 700 or even 1,000 parcels daily during some online shopping holidays or sales seasons such as China's biggest shopping festival

Double 11, which falls on Nov 11 every year. He usually starts work around 6 am by unloading and sorting the parcels, and then from 8 am

he starts his deliveries. He finishes work around 8 pm, though that can stretch to midnight during sales seasons.

When facing extreme weather and possible delivery delays, he will call the customer to explain the reason and appease their feelings.

"In the past seven years, I've delivered over 720,000 parcels without any mistake. I never put fresh products or heavy parcels in parcel lockers, though it can save time," he said, adding that the customer is always the priority, as is their satisfaction.

Wan is a warmhearted person who pays particular attention to residents with disabilities and those who are older, and helps them purchase medicines and take away their trash when delivering parcels.

Wan has also been actively

involved in voluntary services and grassroots governance at the city's Santiaoshi subdistrict since April 2022. As a volunteer, he is responsible for checking the area's sanitation conditions and safety risks, and reports potential risks to the subdistrict office, such as fallen bricks that may cause danger to residents.

"I've been working as a deliveryman for seven years and have witnessed the fast development of Tianjin and the express delivery industry. I'm very pleased that we deliverymen have gained higher social recognition and more respect in recent years," he said.

"I think I will continue to serve the industry in the future and encourage more people surrounding me to get involved in voluntary services."

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Beijing's Liangma and Ba rivers set for scenic revival

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Chaoyang district plans landscaping and commercial construction to boost landmark routes

By HAO NAN

haonan@chinadaily.com.cn

An ambitious project to develop a world-class waterfront economic zone, known as the "two rivers and one belt", was revealed at this year's Chaoyang cultural and tourism high-quality development conference held in March.

The initiative is centered around Chaoyang district's Liangma River and Ba River and the Liangma River cultural and economic belt. It will help connect the two rivers and enable residents and tourists to travel by boat from Jiuxianqiao Road to the Beijing Municipal Administrative Center, according to local officials.

"The goal of constructing a world-class riverside economic zone is to elevate the prominence of the Liangma and Ba rivers as key players, facilitating integrated development and the enhancement of quality in the surrounding areas," said Wang Chengzhi, director of the district's water affairs bureau.

One focus is to enhance the reputation and appeal of the two rivers, with a vision to transform the Liangma into a globally recognized waterway and mold the Ba River into a renowned part of the Beijing section of the Grand Canal.

To enhance the Liangma, a comprehensive 4.8-kilometer renovation project along the river, stretching from the Fourth Ring Road to the Ba River, is set to commence and create a 22-km cruise route. Upon completion, this endeavor will achieve total management and landscape enhancement of the Liangma, benefiting residents around Jiuxianqiao, Dongfeng, and Jiangtai roads.

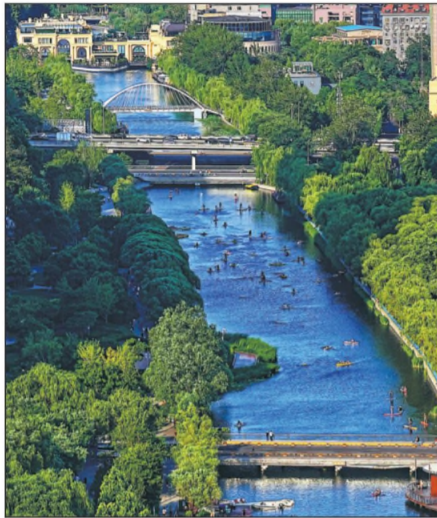
The renovation will also amplify the influence of the Liangma, making it a must-see tourist destination in Beijing.

In fact, the Liangma River has evolved into an increasingly beautiful place. It is now recognized as an "international water-based reception hall" in the city. Over the past three years, it has played host to the New Journey of Liangma River event, enticing people from all walks of life to embark on boat rides and revel in the spring scenery.

Moreover, for two consecutive years, the Beijing Chaoyang Interna-



From left: The interplay of light and shadow on the Ba River. A view of the Liangma River. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



tional Tea Culture Festival has graced the riverbanks, welcoming foreign diplomats and journalists to partake in tastings and conversations. Also, during the Beijing Chaoyang International Light Festival, which has drawn more than 12 million visitors in total, the Liangma dazzles with winter illuminations.

"Whenever I have friends visiting Beijing, I bring them to the Liangma River near my home," said a local woman surnamed Liu. Like her, more Chaoyang residents now recommend the river as a must-visit spot to their relatives and friends both at home and abroad.

Andres Gebauer Millas, the commercial counselor of the embassy of Chile in China, expressed awe during a boat ride along the Liangma, saying he was amazed by the scenery the first time he visited.

The counselor also emphasized that such projects not only provide enjoyment through water activities but contribute to the preservation of water resources.

To better enhance visitors' experiences, Chaoyang is committed to enhancing the boating experience on the river. A third phase of the Liangma River route project, covering a 3-km stretch from Solana Wharf to Nanhu Lake in Chaoyang Park, is to be implemented.

The district is also expediting the development of the Ba River waterfront, with a focus on creating a picturesque and vibrant riverside destination. Plans include the opening of a 2.3-km stretch from Jiuxianqiao Road to Langyuan Station,

offering a blend of ecological, cultural, tourism, and recreational amenities.

The waterfront is now emerging as a must-visit landmark in Chaoyang, attracting a flow of locals and tourists who enjoy cycling, running, and capturing picturesque moments.

Across various social media platforms, netizens have been showering likes upon the Ba River's scenery. One wrote: "Chaoyang is truly cutting-edge. The Liangma River exudes international flair, and the recently revamped Ba River banks are equally striking."

Looking ahead, a 3.6-km renovation project from Langyuan Station to Xingba Road is scheduled, along with the completion of a 6.7-km landscaping project at the Ba River's flood detention and storage area by year-end.

Additionally, a new 15-km boat route along the Ba River, commencing from Jiuxianqiao Road, will be developed, providing residents and tourists with a unique and scenic mode of travel to the Beijing Municipal Administrative Center.

By creating this boat route, Chaoyang aims to promote tourism, leisure activities, and water-based transport while showcasing the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the region.

The construction of the Liangma River cultural and economic belt has also received much attention. In phase one, the focus was on commercial upgrading from the Zuojiashuang area to Solana Wharf. The opening and operation

of areas such as the Liangma Courtyard and a double-deck platform have been realized, providing more diverse consumption venues for the belt.

Based on first-phase construction, Chaoyang district plans to accelerate the urban renewal of the section from Chaoyang Park to Honglingjin Wharf, and promote the high-quality operation of commercial projects in Chaoyang Park, such as the Weibo IN Cross-dimension Gravitational Field and the Apailang Creativity Land.

Also, the district will work on the Liuliwan project, connecting commercial hubs like Sanlitun, Yansha, and Solana malls. This aims to create a new brand of waterfront cultural commerce and tourism, fostering a diverse and multifunctional business environment.

For second-phase construction of the cultural and economic belt, Chaoyang district plans to develop nine major sections around Chaoyang Park, featuring commercial, leisure, and ecological woodland areas.

This phase will involve the digital upgrade of various venues such as the Chaoyang Museum of Urban Planning and the Shell Theater located on the central island of Chaoyang Park, enhancing the district's cultural and economic landscape.

With its ambitious development plan for the "two rivers and one belt" world-class waterfront economic zone, Chaoyang is poised to inject new vitality and momentum into the zone's economic, cultural, and tourism development through careful design and planning, officials said.



Restaurant diners sit at the edge of the Liangma River. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Waterway enters new phase of development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

After years of renovation efforts, the Liangma River in Chaoyang district has become a landmark welcoming international visitors to enjoy diverse lifestyles.

With a total length of about 10 kilometers, the Liangma River originates from the Beijing moat and flows eastward into the Ba River, serving as an ecological and cultural corridor connecting the capital city and its urban regions.

But it wasn't always so picturesque. Prior to 1998, the Liangma River wound through rural landscapes and was primarily used for flood control and irrigation. With the rapid urbanization of Beijing, from 1999 to 2019, the Liangma River was in an environmental water management phase focused on pollution control and ecological improvement.

This period saw fragmented governance. Water and riverbanks were managed separately, resulting in persistent sanitation issues. Businesses along the river turned their backs to the waterway, while pedestrian access remained limited.

Chaoyang district envisions the Liangma River as the eye of the water network in Chaoyang. For such a river, merely achieving clear water quality is far from enough, said Wang Chengzhi, director of the district's water affairs bureau.

"We believe that the Liangma River requires a comprehensive upgrade and transformation. Not only should the water be clear, but the scenery should also be beautiful."

In 2019, the district initiated a new round of comprehensive rehabilitation of the Liangma River, calling for global expertise on landscape corridor management and planning, marking the river's entry into a phase of high-quality development.

Rather than water management, the district proposed "revitalizing the river to drive urban renewal", implementing six projects: river management, bridge renovation, pedestrian connectivity, landscape lighting, river-lake integration, and tourism navigation. This initiative aims for systematic urban renewal that integrates water, city, landscape, culture and tourism, linking ecology, culture and economy.

On top of that, the Liangma River international style waterfront commenced construction in 2019 and opened to the public in August 2020.

With years of efforts, the waterfront underwent advancement, expanding to 6 km by 2022 and adding 24 bridges and 18 scenic spots. The Yansha Bridge passage was completed in 2023 to create an 18-km greenway, and a unique 3D art space was established in 2024, becoming an attraction for more citizens.

From paddleboarding and enjoying river views to savoring food, taking boat rides, skateboarding and fishing, the Liangma River offers various leisure activities. The revitalized Liangma River waterfront has emerged as a popular public space combining culture, leisure, fitness, entertainment and shopping.

The quality of life for residents along the Liangma River has significantly improved. Businesses on both sides of the river have shifted from "operating away from the river" to "embracing riverfront development", with commercial activity increasing by more than 30 percent, said Zhu

"We believe that the Liangma River requires a comprehensive upgrade and transformation. Not only should the water be clear, but the scenery should also be beautiful."

Wang Chengzhi, director of Chaoyang district's water affairs bureau

Yalei, deputy director of Chaoyang district's water affairs bureau.

The Liangma River has become the capital's only waterfront economic belt that integrates elements of culture, commerce and tourism. It exemplifies the scientific concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", Zhu said.

In recent years, the river has seen a series of international events. Also, an increasing number of bookstores, restaurants, cafes and cultural shops are setting up along the riverbanks, creating a diverse blend of leisure, tourism and consumption.

In 2023, Chaoyang district initiated the construction of the Liangma River cultural and economic belt, aiming to create a world-class waterfront consumption economic zone to support Beijing's development as an international consumption center.

Since its launch, the belt has introduced numerous new urban consumption scenarios and activities such as the Beijing Chaoyang International Tea Culture Festival and the China International Craft Beer Festival.

In the second phase of the cultural and economic belt, Chaoyang district will focus on the urban renewal of Chaoyang Park, adopting the planning concept of transitioning "from an urban park to a park city". Multiple locations will undergo renovation and enhancement. Upon completion, a diverse cultural hub that integrates the city with the park will emerge.

Additionally, the Chaoyang Museum of Urban Planning team is focused on introducing emerging industries like digital entertainment and digital art, creating a cutting-edge cultural venue for young people.

The Shell Theater located on the central island of Chaoyang Park aims to integrate top-quality domestic and international artistic elements, establishing a cultural hub within the park to enrich citizens' lives.

Meanwhile, Fangzhou Lake, located across from the Pop Mart City Park, is a popular destination. The second phase will target a young, dynamic audience by incorporating cabins, lawns and the lake to craft a relaxed, trendy outdoor lifestyle and an "internet-famous" consumption area.

According to the district, in its third phase, the belt will focus on the Liuliwan project, positioning it as an "urban-style boundless waterfront park", enriching the waterfront consumption scenarios along the Liangma River, enhancing the quality of commerce, and invigorating the overall vitality of the Liuliwan area and the Liangma River cultural and economic belt.

Waterfront project helps people get closer to nature

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Indigo Wharf in Beijing's Chaoyang district was officially completed recently, injecting vitality into the renovation and development of the Ba River waterfront.

The wharf, which is the concluding segment of the project stretching from Jiuxianqiao Road to Langyuan, began construction in December 2024 and was completed in late March.

The wharf area spans approximately 300 meters in length and 65 meters in width, covering a total area of 18,000 square meters. Notably, its 4,000-sq-m water surface is set to provide convenient docking for cruise boats and make it a crucial hub in navigational planning of the Ba River.

In terms of wharf landscaping, an 80-meter-long arc-shaped walkway with a unique design has been constructed, offering visitors a distinctive experience.

A 300-sq-m elevated viewing platform has also been built, providing an expansive view for visitors to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Ba River. Additionally, a 100-meter waterside promenade has been developed, bringing people closer to the water for a more intimate experience of nature.

The completion of the wharf also provides a space for citizens to enjoy leisure activities, boat tours, and performances. This development contributes to Chaoyang district's construction of the "two rivers and one belt" world-class waterfront economic zone, local officials said.

The Ba River waterfront space is located in the eastern part of



Modern lighting adds color to Indigo Wharf in Beijing's Chaoyang district. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chaoyang district and extends 2.3 kilometers.

Through the implementation of water conservancy and aquatic ecological projects, pedestrian connectivity and landscaping beautification, this area has been transformed into a vibrant and fashionable waterfront that integrates diverse functions such as ecology, culture, tourism and consumption.

"We are committed to the joint management of water and shore, breaking the old pattern of 'water and shore being distinct and separate'. By leveraging our unique geographical advantages and diverse business patterns, we aim to achieve the harmonious integration of water and city," said an official from Chaoyang district's water affairs bureau.

The Ba River originates from the northeast section of the Beijing city moat and flows into the Wenyu River, spanning a total length of 21.7 km. It plays a crucial role in flood control and drainage for the northern part of

Chaoyang district and serves as an important flood diversion channel for the central urban area.

In 2022, the district completed the comprehensive environmental enhancement of a 1.5-km waterfront space in the Fourth Embassy Area near the Ba River. In 2024, it continued to promote urban renewal through river revitalization, in line with the "garden city" construction requirements and commenced management of the Ba River waterfront space.

Connecting greenways and pedestrian paths to create distinctive urban scenic corridors is a key aspect of the "garden city" initiative. In its management efforts, Chaoyang district has built and renovated three pedestrian bridges, lifted the pathways under the Tuofangying Bridge, and connected the pedestrian networks of commercial areas, residential communities and parks.

Riverside motorways have been transformed into pedestrian paths,

and a 4.6-km shaded cycling trail has been established, allowing residents to commute and enjoy the river scenery.

Additionally, the district has incorporated the Ba River's cultural heritage and ecological concepts into the project. New features include the "fragrance of wine" sculpture and an illuminated cultural wall that highlights the river's 800-year history. Efforts have been made to protect the ecological environment as much as possible.

According to the district, the Ba River management project not only connects Langyuan Station but also links Indigo shopping mall, 798 Art District and 751D-Park, promoting interaction between different commercial areas and boosting local cultural industries.

Li Xiangyang, a photographer, used to visit Langyuan Station weekly for shoots. With the opening of the Ba River waterfront space, he now enjoys strolling, capturing beautiful photos, biking, or walking there after work.

"The changes in the Ba River and its surroundings have been rapid. From the environment to transportation and amenities, it's a place that makes you want to stay once you arrive."

Next, Chaoyang district will expedite the renovation of the Tuofangying and Beigangzi sluices to establish a 4-km tourist route from Indigo Wharf to Beigang Wharf.

The Ba River waterfront space will drive business upgrades, stimulate the nighttime economy, and increase urban consumption vitality," said an official of the district's water affairs bureau.

GLOBAL LENS

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Clockwise from above: Khendo Tamang (left) and Nirmala Pariyar share a light moment at the trauma care center of Bir Hospital during their treatment in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Sept 8, 2015. Tamang and Pariyar try out their prosthetic legs for the first time at a rehabilitation center in Kathmandu on Aug 19, 2015. Tamang and Pariyar play a game on a cellphone as they share a bed at the trauma care center of Bir Hospital on July 6, 2015. PHOTOS BY NIRANJAN SHRESTHA / AP

JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

Friendship binds two girls who survive 2015 Nepal earthquake with each losing one leg



Clockwise from above: Khendo Tamang (right) and Nirmala Pariyar share a desk in their classroom in Lalitpur, Nepal, on March 27. Tamang writes a message on Pariyar's shirt as they part ways after being together for 10 years in Lalitpur on March 28. Pariyar and Tamang study together before their final exams in Lalitpur on March 27. PHOTOS BY NIRANJAN SHRESTHA / AP

The devastating 2015 Nepal earthquake that killed thousands changed the lives of many in the Himalayan nation. But it was the beginning of a friendship for two girls who each lost a leg in the tremor.

Nirmala Pariyar and Khendo Tamang were 7 and 8 years old when they met at a hospital in Kathmandu after they were brought there for treatment. Both were injured during the April 25, 2015,

earthquake, which damaged more than 1 million houses and buildings in Nepal.

Pariyar comforted Tamang. "You've lost one leg, and so have I. But we survived. Isn't that beautiful?" Pariyar said 10 years ago.

They shared the same hospital bed and supported each other. They went on to attend the same boarding school.

"Our friendship is still strong and she has been my biggest support

even during the times when I am away from family," Pariyar said.

"When I sometimes miss my family and cry, she is always there for me," she added. "She has been not just a friend but like my own sister to me."

Pariyar was pinned under a fallen metal gate and concrete wall after the quake. She was pulled out when people passing by saw her hair, and was transported to the hospital.

"I was unconscious but I was told

one of my legs was barely attached to my body. They put the leg in a cardboard box and took me to the hospital," she said.

She regained consciousness at the hospital a week after the earthquake. A few days later, she met Tamang, who was brought in from her village east of the capital, Kathmandu.

It has taken months of surgery and rehabilitation to get them walking and performing everyday tasks.

Both girls have been fitted with prosthetic legs, and often have to visit the disability rehabilitation center to get readjustments.

Both girls, now in their teenage years, have just finished the national high school exams and are planning their future.

Pariyar is considering majoring in science in junior college because that promises better prospects — but in her heart she wants to be a singer.

Ten years after the devastating earthquake, most of the buildings and houses that were damaged have been rebuilt. Schools and public buildings have been built to better safety standards.

Earthquakes are common in Nepal, which is covered mostly by mountain terrain and home to most of the highest peaks in the world.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



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Tamang (right) and Pariyar visit a rehabilitation center in Kathmandu to alter prosthetic legs on April 11.

Tamang (right) and Pariyar play in the courtyard of Bir Hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Aug 19, 2015.



From left: The Hukou Waterfalls on the Jixian section of the Yellow River attract flocks of visitors on May 4. LIU GUIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY Tourists taste local delicacies at a food street in Yuncheng city on May 2. JIANG HUA / FOR CHINA DAILY A fashion show featuring Northern Wei Dynasty costumes is held in Datong during the May Day holiday. LIU TONG AND HAN KUN / FOR CHINA DAILY Tourists take photos of colored sculptures at the Buddhist temple of Guanyintang in Changzhi city. YANG CHENYU / FOR CHINA DAILY Domestic and overseas travelers visit the ancient city of Pingyao. ZHAO XIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY In southern Shanxi, a wheat farm featuring a railway passing overhead is now a favored destination for photographers. ZHANG HUAXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

CULTURAL HERITAGE BOLSTERS TOURISM IN SHANXI

By YUAN SHENGGAO

During the five-day May Day holiday, spanning from May 1 to 5, tourists to the North China province of Shanxi were offered an impressive experience due to the local tourism practices to integrate history and modernity, cultural heritage with natural attractions, and enhanced services for visitors.

On the evening of May 2, after a tight day's schedule touring the ancient city of Datong, Zhang Yifan, a tourist from Beijing, joined a crowd of people gathering in a square in front of Yongtaimen — the southern gate of the city wall. They were waiting for the opening of a performance show entitled *Because of Datong*.

When the setting sun's glow on the glazed roof tiles of the gate tower became dim, the show began with a big shout: "Open the gate!"

The city gate opened, men and women, wearing clothes of the ancient Xianbei ethnic group, were found dancing on both sides of a flagstone walk leading to the interior of the city wall. Audience members were ushered into a show area featuring a huge stage with rows of seats in front of it.

When seeing the show beginning with craftsmen working on a cliff with chisels and a caravan approaching with the ringing of camel bells, Zhang immediately realized it is about the city's heyday in history and what made it a cultural landmark in Shanxi and even the entire country.

As the show reveals, one and a half millennia ago, Datong was standing at the crossroads of cultural exchanges between the East and West, and among various ethnic peoples inside China.

Datong, then called Pingcheng, used to be the national capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), which was founded by the Xianbei ethnic people from China's northeast. Generations of emperors and rulers showed their willingness to integrate with the cultures of other ethnic groups, especially the Han, and to embrace the Buddhist culture coming all the way from the west via the ancient Silk Road.

A shining example of this cultural exchange and integration move was the construction of the Yungang Grottoes, a Buddhist cave art treasure trove carved out of the mountain cliffs in the western suburbs of Datong.

When Datong served as the national capital of Northern Wei, it was also an important hub of the ancient Silk Road. Along with the trade in commodities, Buddhism came via this traditional trade route from its original birthplace in South Asia.

In the process of spreading the Buddhism religion to China, which began during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), the dissemination of Buddhist culture, represented by the construction of caves and temples throughout the country, came to its peak during the period spanning from the fourth to the sixth centuries.

At that time, Mogao in Dunhuang, Gansu province; Yungang in Datong, Shanxi province; and Longmen in Luoyang, Henan



Wearing traditional clothes, tourists take a selfie in the ancient city of Pingyao on May 3. ZHAO XIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

province represented the highest level of Buddhist cave art.

In Datong, between the fifth and sixth centuries, local artisans, led by the famed monk Tan Ya, constructed dozens of cliff-side caves and hundreds of smaller niches in Yungang. They then decorated the spaces with colored sculptures, patterns and architectural structures. Consequently, Yungang became an enduring legacy of history, culture and art.

After watching the show, Zhang said he had a better understanding about Datong and Yungang Grottoes. "This show, leveraging modern digital technologies and a novel narrative style, presented vivid stories on what makes Yungang a cultural landmark and Datong an enticing tourist attraction," Zhang said.

Integrating tradition with modernity was the theme of many tourist destinations in Shanxi during the May Day holiday.

In the ancient city of Pingyao, which had been the hub for business activities of the renowned Shanxi merchants, a number of events, including intangible cultural heritage-featured parades and digital light shows, were added to the regular reality show *Pingyao Revisited* during the May Day holiday, giving tourists an immersive experience on what happened in history.

The city of Pingyao in Jinzhong is said to have the best-preserved historical cityscapes in China. It looks much the same as it looked during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

That was also the period when the Shanxi merchants, also known as Jinshang merchants, reached their peak of prosperity.

The Jinshang merchants are said to have dominated the foreign trade business in northern China during the two dynasties, and Pingyao was the hub of their operations.

The Jinshang merchants' success in business has left a precious legacy in Pingyao and its neighboring areas, including the grand family courtyards, and the premises of various old firms, like China's earliest banking firms known as *piaohao* and armed courier businesses called *biaojiao*.

Many tourists attended an intangible cultural heritage-featured parade on May 1. When strolling through the well-protected ancient streets, they were amazed by the number of premises of old Jinshang firms. "I'm sure that Pingyao definitely outnumbered any city in China in this aspect," said one of the tourists at the parade.

During the parade, tourists learned that Pingyao is not only about Jinshang-related legacy, there are also rich forms of intangible cultural heritage.

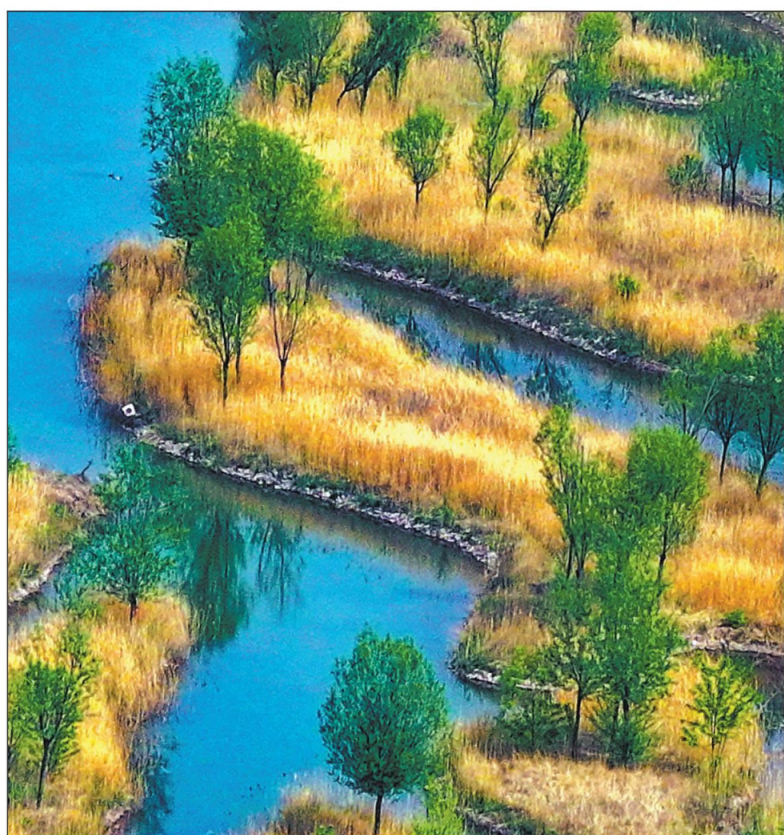
The representative ICH items in Pingyao include lacquerware and beef made with ancient techniques.

Shopping for lacquerware and beef is always a part of the itinerary for many tourists to the city.

The traditional techniques for Pingyao's hand-polished — or *tuiguang* — lacquerware made the national ICH list in 2006. Those for beef production were included in



Province's renowned history, attractions prove a hit with tourists during recent May Day holiday



Clockwise from top: The Fenhe River area is now a sightseeing belt in Taiyuan city. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY A section of the Yellow River No 1 Highway in Pinglu county. YAO ZHONGJI / FOR CHINA DAILY Crowds of tourists visit the famed Stork Tower in Yongji city on May 3. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY A scenic wetland park on the Fenhe River in Taiyuan. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A molten iron fireworks show, which features spraying molten iron into the air, is held in Xiadxian county on May 3. YAO ZHONGJI / FOR CHINA DAILY

the same list in 2008. Due to its rich portfolio of offerings to tourists, Pingyao received more than 120,000 visits on May 1 alone.

During the May Day holiday, tourists to Shanxi were also offered an opportunity to experience the local life, especially the authentic food of Shanxi.

Chen Donghai, a tourist from the neighboring province of Shaanxi, for instance, spent one day exploring the streets and alleys in the southern Shanxi city of Yuncheng, to find some food varieties favored by both locals and tourists.

He started his journey on the early morning of May 4. During a random stroll, he was lured in by the pleasant smell of food to a neighborhood fair called Donghu Farm Produce Market.

To his surprise, there were many similar-minded tourists who saw an experience of local food as an important part of their itinerary. He was informed by one tourist that this market is already a hit on the internet and a check-in place for many tourists to Yuncheng.

He was amazed by the variety of snacks and fruits displayed at stalls. "I was recommended to try a local snack called egg-and-jujube cake," Chen said. "This is something I tasted for the first time."

He also tasted other snacks like fried dough twists and persimmon cake, saying that the experience is a highlight of his tour of Shanxi.

In a rural tour destination called Duncun in the city of Xinzhou, the unique experience is visiting a nighttime fair featuring an open-air movie theater surrounded by dozens of dining outlets.

"Watching a show of old movies, complemented with kebabs and beer, is the most relaxing part of our tour in Shanxi," said a tourist.

For many visitors, a tour of Shanxi is always a feast to their taste buds as there are more than 1,000 food varieties made from flour, including the famed knife-cutting noodle and flowery bun.

Shanxi's improved infrastructure and services prove to be another draw to tourists during the May Day holiday.

A solo traveler surnamed Zhang said what prompted him to make the decision to visit Shanxi this time is the easy access to charging facilities along the roads and in scenic areas, because he plans to travel with an electric car.

"I learned that charging stations for electric vehicles are easily available in Shanxi," he said. "But I was still surprised and delighted when I saw free charging services are offered at the parking lots of many scenic areas."

To facilitate travel in Shanxi, the province has built three major sightseeing highways to link thousands of destinations along the Yellow River, the Taihang Mountains and the Great Wall. With a total length of about 13,000 kilometers, the three highways — called Yellow River No 1, Taihang Mountains No 1 and Great Wall No 1 respectively — became fully operational last year.

Upon the full operations, the transport authority of Shanxi immediately released a three-year action plan to improve infrastructure and services of the roads.

This plan's basic requirements for the highways include a service area to be established every 25 km and a charging station every 50 km.

It also calls for the establishment of a great number of camping sites, viewpoints and public toilets, as well as 5G telecommunication base stations along the roads.

In Datong, to meet the demand of the increasing number of tourists, the urban bus service was extended to 10 pm during the May Day holiday. And three shuttle bus lines were added to transport tourists to hot destinations like Yungang Grottoes.

Similar bus lines dedicated to tourist transportation were also added in cities including Xinzhou and Linfen.

During the five-day holiday, Shanxi received more than 22 million domestic tourist visits, increasing 22.4 percent from the same period of last year, according to the Shanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

The total revenue generated from domestic tourists reached 16.03 billion yuan (\$2.22 billion), growing 27.61 percent year-on-year.

Although provincewide statistics for inbound overseas tourists are not available yet, many individual tourism operators in Shanxi reported steady growth in this aspect.

Some overseas tourists said that the fame of Shanxi as a cultural tourism destination has already been known by many and the province is highly preferred when they make plans to visit China.

An Australian tourist named Emily, for instance, was among the many foreign visitors to Pingyao ancient city. Emily said she was there to experience the culture relating to the famed Jinshang merchants.

She added that the grandeur of the city, with its well protected ancient streets and old buildings, amazed her, giving her a better understanding of the prosperity of Jinshang merchants in the old days.

Several Serbian tourists were found at the Fantawild Oriental Heritage Taiyuan, an amusement park themed around the culture, history, legends and folk traditions of Shanxi.

"I like the way that Chinese culture is presented in the amusement park, with history revived with modern technologies," said one of the Serbians.

In addition to drawing in tourists from its traditional markets of Europe, the Americas, Australia and Southeast Asia, Shanxi is expected to attract visitors from a new source country — Mongolia — this summer.

On May 2, a group of visitors representing the North Asian country's tourism operators began a business research tour of Datong. They were there to explore the local tourism resources before the opening of the Datong-Ulan Bator flight on June 3.

Zhang Qi contributed to this story.

BUSINESS

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More tax refund stores set to open

Move expected to help boost inbound tourism and consumption in China

By ZHU WENQIAN
 zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

China plans to accelerate the availability of tax refund stores for eligible overseas visitors to about 10,000 shops nationwide this year, almost tripling the current number, as the country continues to boost inbound tourism and consumption, a senior official said.

By the end of last year, China had more than 3,700 stores nationwide available for tax refunds for overseas visitors, adding more than 600 stores over the previous year, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Promoting inbound consumption serves as an important lever to help vigorously boost consumption, and it holds great growth potential. It will also help offset the impact of additional tariffs to a certain extent, said Sheng Qiuping, vice-minister of commerce, during a conference on Thursday in Beijing.

China will continue to optimize the layout of tax refund stores, encourage various regions to set up such stores in major commercial complexes, shopping streets, tourist attractions, resorts, cultural and museum venues, airports, passenger ports, hotels and other places where overseas tourists gather, according to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Commerce and five other departments in late April.

The country has lowered the starting point for tax refunds from 500 yuan (\$69.3) to 200 yuan and doubled the limit for cash refunds from 10,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan.

In addition, the country will relax the registration requirements for retailers to become tax refund stores, allowing newly opened shops that have been established for less than a year to apply to become tax refund shops, and the filing time has been shortened to within five working days, the guideline said.

"Tax refund stores are also encouraged to broaden product offerings to include time-honored brands, renowned Chinese

consumer goods, smart devices, intangible cultural heritage items, crafts and specialty products," Sheng said.

Globally, Japan has more than 60,000 stores that are available for tax refunds for overseas visitors, and South Korea has some 20,000 such stores. France, Germany and Italy each have over 10,000 such stores. The number of such stores in China is far from enough, the Ministry of Commerce said.

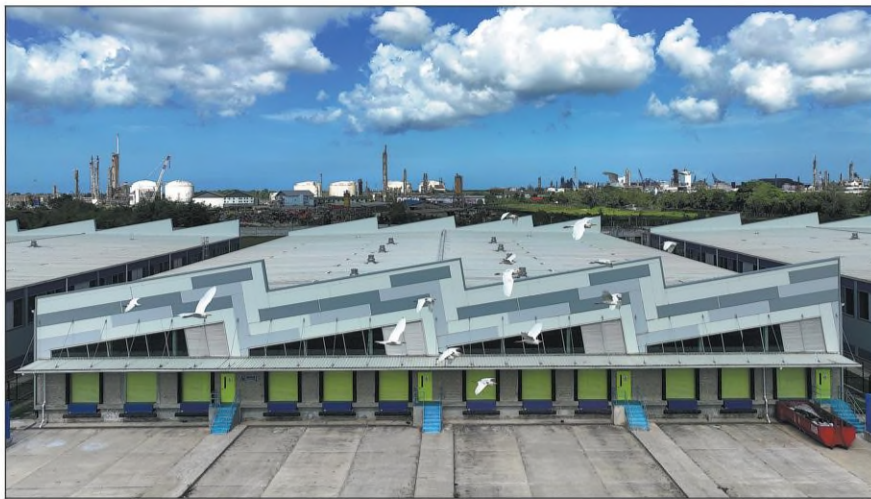
Last year, total expenditure of inbound tourists in China reached \$94.2 billion, accounting for 0.5 percent of China's GDP, which is lower than the proportions of 1 percent to 3 percent for major countries in the world, said the commerce ministry.

"Accelerating the promotion of the tax refund policy will help reduce shopping costs for overseas travelers and inject new impetus to boost consumption. This is an important measure for China to cope with external uncertainties," Sheng said.

China has been opening its doors wider to international travelers. In 2024, the country expanded its unilateral visa-free policy to include 38 countries, allowing visits of up to 30 days, according to the National Immigration Administration.

Multiple favorable policies have helped significantly boost inbound consumption. During the recent five-day May Day holiday, the country saw the number of inbound and outbound passenger trips of foreign visitors exceed 1.1 million, up 43.1 percent year-on-year, said the National Immigration Administration.

Shanghai, one of the cities with the highest concentration of foreign tourists, said inbound consumption has become an important lever for it to actively respond to the trade frictions between China and the United States, and promoting inbound consumption will help the city to build itself into an international consumption center.



A view of a Chinese-invested industrial park in Trinidad and Tobago. ZHAO KAI / XINHUA

Infra firms boost LatAm's development

By WANG KEJU
 wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Latin America's rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to a rising need for improved transportation, energy, and telecommunication networks, presenting a significant opportunity for Chinese infrastructure firms to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation, analysts said.

The unique strengths and expertise of Chinese infrastructure firms, honed through decades of large-scale project execution, make them well-positioned to contribute to Latin America's development aspirations, they added.

From Chancay Port in Peru and Bogota Metro Line 1 in Colombia to Jamaica's first modern highway and an ultrahigh voltage power transmission line in Brazil, the scale of China-Latin America cooperation in the field of infrastructure has continued to expand in recent years.

China Development Bank told China Daily that it completed the latest round of RMB-denominated financing for an ultrahigh voltage direct current transmission project in northeastern Brazil, to facilitate the purchase of relevant large-scale equipment.

Brazil, a country of vast geographical expanse, faces the challenge of reconciling the uneven distribution of its abundant hydroelectric resources in the north with the concentrated power demand in the large cities of the southeast, said Cui Dawei, deputy director of the engineering technology department of State Grid Brazil Holding.

"Addressing this mismatch

between energy supply and load has been a long-standing issue for Brazil's energy sector," Cui said. "China's experience in developing ultrahigh voltage direct current transmission projects has provided a viable solution to this challenge."

According to Cui, the 1,468-kilometer transmission line will transmit clean energy, including wind, solar, and hydropower, from the northeastern and northern regions of Brazil to the Federal District, home to the capital Brasilia, meeting the electricity needs of approximately 12 million people.

As of the end of April, China Development Bank has cumulatively provided around \$165 billion in financing support to over 260 projects across 21 countries in Latin America.

China's infrastructure investments in Latin America span a wide geographical area, covering the major countries in the region and encompassing diverse sectors such as ports, power, railways, and urban transportation, said Wang Fei, associate researcher at the Institute of Latin American Studies, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

From enhancing port capacities and upgrading power grids to building modern railways and urban transit systems, China's infrastructure projects have had a tangible and far-reaching impact on the economies and communities of Latin American countries, Wang said.

The substantial investment amounts and the associated job creation have been crucial in supporting the economic development and social well-being of the region, Wang added.

The cooperation models between China and Latin America have also been constantly improving, adapting to local conditions and market-driven principles, Wang said, adding that the two sides have explored a variety of collaborative formats, including joint ventures, public-private partnerships, and concession agreements.

Wang noted that the Belt and Road Initiative has provided important policy support for China-Latin America infrastructure cooperation.

So far, over 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have joined the Belt and Road cooperation framework.

Qiu Xiaoqi, special representative of the Chinese government on Latin American affairs, said that looking ahead, Beijing will prioritize the enhancement of connectivity networks between China and Latin America, with a focus on building a comprehensive land-and-sea integrated connectivity system.

"China and Latin America are among the most dynamic and fastest-growing nations and regions, forming a crucial part of the Global South," Qiu said, noting that trade volume between China and the region reached \$518.4 billion last year, more than double the volume of a decade ago.

By strengthening their unity and cooperation, the two sides not only have the potential to create a vast trans-Pacific supermarket, but also the unwavering drive to fend off the onslaught of unilateralism and protectionism, enabling their respective development and revitalization, Qiu added.

Financial policy package injects cash, confidence into economic vibrancy

A 0.5 percentage-point reduction in the reserve requirement ratio for eligible financial institutions took effect on Thursday, with the move expected to inject roughly 1 trillion yuan (\$139 billion) of long-term liquidity into China's financial market.

The RRR cut, the first such move since the start of the year, comes after the seven-day reverse repo rate was cut by 0.1 percentage point by the Chinese central bank, which took effect on May 8.

The reduction in the RRR and reverse repo rate, along with expanding re-lending facilities and sci-tech innovation bonds issuances, were among a raft of supportive measures announced last week by monetary and financial regulatory bodies, as the world's second-largest economy steps up efforts to stabilize markets and sustain economic recovery amid external headwinds.

Analysts believe this package of supportive financial policies, by boosting liquidity supplies and reducing borrowing costs for both businesses and residents, will create a favorable financial environment for stabilizing market expectations and making an impact on consumption growth and economic restructuring.

These supportive policies are in line with the guiding principles unveiled at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

China in April, which called for efforts to accelerate the implementation of more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies and make full use of a more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy.

Maintaining ample liquidity through measures such as the RRR cut can provide sufficient resources for financial institutions and support lending to the real economy, while the reduction in interest rates and innovation in structural monetary policy tools will help stimulate effective domestic demand, a view broadly shared by experts.

"A 0.5 percentage-point cut in the RRR will effectively meet the market's demand for long-term liquidity," said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Co Ltd.

Also starting on May 8, the RRR for auto financing and financial leasing companies was slashed by 5 percentage points to zero percent, with the cut expected to increase the credit supply capacity of these two types of institutions in their respective fields.

Dong said that this notable RRR targeting and financing and financial leasing companies has drawn significant market attention because of their anticipated impact on boosting car consumption and equipment upgrade investment.

China's central bank governor, Pan Gongsheng, said last week

that the seven-day reverse repo rate cut is expected to result in the loan prime rate, a market-based benchmark lending rate, dropping by 0.1 percentage point.

Effective on May 8, the interest rates on personal housing provident fund loans were also lowered by 0.25 percentage point. Meanwhile, the rate of re-lending, a structural monetary tool via which the central bank provides loans to financial institutions, was also lowered by 0.25 percentage point starting from May 7, with the cut aiming to guide financial institutions to enhance financial support for the nation's key strategies and development fields as well as weak links.

Chen Wenjing, director of policy research at the China Index Academy, said that the reduction in the interest rate for personal housing provident fund loans is expected to further alleviate the pressure on residents to purchase houses and boost home purchase demand.

Analysts say the adjustment and optimization of the structural monetary policy tools are in line with the nation's economic restructuring efforts and are geared toward promoting consumption and sci-tech innovation, with all these recent supportive policies helping boost market confidence amid external uncertainties.

XINHUA

New air cargo route slashes cost of logistics

By WEI WANGYU
 weiwangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

The first dedicated air cargo route linking Urumqi, a key aviation hub in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, with Zurich, the largest city in Switzerland and a major international financial center, officially commenced operations earlier this month.

The route is scheduled to be operated with one return flight per week, with a technical stop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for refueling.

As a milestone in the Belt and Road Initiative's aerial corridor development, this jointly operated route by Xinjiang-based supply chain enterprises and a European aviation logistics consortium establishes direct air cargo connectivity between northwestern China and Europe's economic heartland for the first time.

The launch of this new route is a major boon for cross-border e-commerce enterprises like ours," said Feng Liang, general manager of Xinjiang Wanshengtong Supply Chain Management Co.

"Previously, transporting goods to Central European countries required multiple transits, was time-consuming, and posed relatively high transportation risks. The launch of this route has enhanced transportation efficiency and reduced logistics costs," Feng said.

Zhao Beijing, director of the Customs supervision section at Urumqi Tianshan International Airport, said, "We have continuously optimized regulatory procedures to guarantee 24/7 appointment-based clearance services, ensuring rapid and efficient cargo inspection and release."

Zhang Jing, an associate professor at Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics, said that the route's launch not only reshapes Eurasia's logistics landscape, but also strategically empowers western China's economic openness through point-to-point air cargo capabilities, injecting momentum into the nation's dual-circulation development paradigm.

"As the inaugural freighter ascends into the skies, this modern aerial trade artery heralds a transformative chapter in global supply chain dynamics," she said.

"Beyond freight manifests and economic metrics, this air corridor carries the DNA of the ancient Silk Road, a living testament to how trade routes inherently become cultural conduits. When Swiss goods meet Xinjiang's products in the same cargo hold, we're witnessing a 21st-century dialogue of civilizations powered by logistics innovation," she said, adding that "every Uzbek-refueled flight to Zurich" isn't just moving goods, it's transplanting China's western development ethos into Europe's consciousness. The cold-chain arriving in European supermarkets subtly redefines the "made in China" narratives, while European art exhibitions airlifted to Xinjiang museums dismantle perceptual barriers.

Xu Linchuan, a researcher in the department of economics at The London School of Economics and Political Science, said: "As China and Europe are each other's second-largest trading partners, the launch of this freight route will further facilitate the flow of goods between the two sides, reduce transportation costs and yield output gains for both parties."

"For exporters of time-sensitive goods and services such as electronics and pharmaceuticals, the freight route reduces logistics costs and inventory risks."

"For Xinjiang's agri-food and textile producers, it provides a premium channel into the European market. Likewise, the high valued-added European products such as precision machinery and luxury goods can reach Chinese consumers without detouring through the existing congested gateways," he said.

Emergency drills



The Yuanping Track Division of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd conducts emergency drills in key areas, with the aim of solidifying fire safety responsibilities and building a strong defense system that will better safeguard railway transport.

FU XUEZHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Innovation prevents damage to power lines

Thanks to innovations by Chinese power workers, large machinery has been kept from damaging power lines during construction work. Staff members from State Grid Xuzhou Power Supply Co in East China's Jiangsu province developed a high-voltage proximity alarm device, issuing voice reminders of different levels when the distance is less than 20 meters, 10 meters and five meters. At a construction site along the Weifang-Suqian High-Speed Railway near the 110 kilovolt Mayun Line,

each incoming crane uses such devices, which mainly consist of a sensor and an alarm. Since January this year, they have been installed on 120 sets of machinery, issuing alarms to over 600 users.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened seven pips to 7.1963 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

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Peace momentum must be sustained by talks between Russia and Ukraine

On announcing in April 2023 that a special representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian affairs was to visit Ukraine and other countries to conduct in-depth communication with all parties with the aim of promoting a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, President Xi Jinping stressed that dialogue and negotiations are the only viable way to end the conflict.

As a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Wednesday, China has been committed to promoting talks for peace since day one of the conflict. It supports resolving the crisis through dialogue and negotiation, and calls on all parties to create conditions for the resumption of direct talks between Russia and Ukraine.

Beijing has therefore welcomed the news that high-level delegations from Russia and Ukraine met in Istanbul, Turkiye, on Thursday in what was their first direct talks in three years, opening up the prospect of a potential ceasefire as well as a path forward for resolving the Ukraine crisis through dialogues and negotiations.

The talks, attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and observed by high-ranking officials from the United States including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and US President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine Keith Kellogg, have raised hopes that further steps could be taken that lead to a breakthrough that can help end the Ukraine crisis.

Given that the last known direct talks between Kyiv and Moscow took place in Turkiye and Belarus in the spring of 2022, the current positive momentum is both hard-won and worth cherishing. Both the belligerent parties and the influential players involved should show good faith and flexibility so as to pave the way for the talks to yield positive results.

The direct talks were made possible after an array of diplomatic overtures from Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Zelensky over the past few days. After the Ukrainian leader, backed by his European allies, called for Russia to agree to an immediate 30-day ceasefire last week, the Russian leader proposed direct negotiations with Ukraine in the Turkish city.

Trump, who is on a three-nation tour in the Middle East, indicated at first that he might also show up in Istanbul, but later announced he wouldn't. Although the attendance of only

Zelensky may make those looking for dramatic scenes disappointed, even without the participation of Putin and Trump, the meeting is still significant.

As the first direct communication between the two belligerents in three years, the meeting provides a much-needed opportunity for the two parties to talk face-to-face to explore ways to resolve their conflict.

The White House may try to claim credit for the seemingly positive development since it has been pushing and nudging both sides to talk after making major policy shifts since the new incumbent took office. Yet there is no getting away from the fact that the conflict has been a proxy war instigated by the US with the aim of weakening Russia in preparation for the US' switch of focus from Europe to the Asia-Pacific.

Nor from the fact that other members of the international community have also contributed by constantly urging the belligerent parties to resolve the crisis through political means. On Tuesday, China and Brazil issued a joint statement on the Ukraine crisis, welcoming Putin's proposal to open peace talks and Zelensky's positive response.

The two countries put forward a six-point proposal aimed at promoting a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis based on direct dialogue as the only way to end the conflict. To that end there should be no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party.

China stands on the side of peace, and its core stance is to facilitate peace talks. That has always been and remains China's position. China did not create the Ukraine crisis, nor is it a party to the crisis. All it does is aboveboard. Any attempts to portray China's stance and actions otherwise are ill-intentioned, and meant to belie the facts and its endeavors to promote peace with the politicized intention of undermining its principled position.

It is to be hoped all the efforts that have been and are being made for the resumption of direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine will now start to bear fruit.

A fair, lasting and binding peace deal arrived at through dialogue and negotiation is the only way to realize a sustainable settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Colombia joins Belt and Road for a more equitable global economy

Colombia's participation in the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative on Wednesday marks another milestone in the deepening partnership between China and Latin America. Following fruitful outcomes at the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum and the landmark Beijing Declaration, this development underscores the growing recognition that cooperation with China is a gateway to sustainable development and shared prosperity.

The Beijing Declaration, adopted by participating countries at the meeting on Tuesday, outlines concrete steps for collaboration in green development, digital transformation and poverty alleviation. By emphasizing open and inclusive cooperation, the declaration aligns with Latin America's quest for autonomous development paths, free from the conditionalities often attached to Western-led initiatives.

Colombia, long considered a traditional ally of the United States in Latin America, has made a decisive pivot toward China by joining the Belt and Road Initiative, a move that reflects broader geopolitical and economic recalibrations in the region.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro's administration, advocating for a multipolar foreign policy, has recognized the limitations of over-reliance on US markets and security frameworks. The country's entry into the Belt and Road Initiative signals a strategic realignment toward diversifica-

tion, particularly in infrastructure, energy and technology, areas where China holds a competitive edge.

China's expertise in large-scale projects, such as the ongoing Bogota Metro Line 1, Colombia's largest infrastructure project to date, demonstrates how Belt and Road investments can address Latin America's chronic infrastructure deficits. Once operational in 2028, it will cut travel time between terminal stations from the existing around three hours to 27 minutes.

China encourages value-added exports from Latin America, moving beyond the traditional commodity-for-loans model. Colombia, for instance, aims to expand shipments of coffee, flowers and even high-tech goods to China, reducing its dependence on volatile raw material markets. In fact, China has long been Colombia's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade hitting 149.63 billion yuan (\$20.75 billion) in 2024, up 13.1 percent year-on-year.

Colombia's inclusion in the initiative is particularly significant given its geographical position as a bridge between Central and South America, with access to both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. This makes it a crucial node for China's vision of a transcontinental logistics network, including potential rail and port projects that could reshape regional trade flows.

Moreover, the Belt and Road Initiative offers Latin America an alternative to the debt-trap narratives

often pushed by Western critics. Unlike past models of foreign investment, China's approach emphasizes joint ventures, technology transfers and long-term industrial partnerships.

For example, Chinese companies are not only building Bogota's metro but also investing in local manufacturing, such as medical equipment and telecommunications.

Colombia's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative is a bellwether for Latin America's future. As the region seeks to reduce inequality and boost competitiveness, China's role as a financier, builder and market provider presents a compelling case for deeper integration.

The Beijing Declaration, with its emphasis on mutual benefit, stands as a transformative manifesto of the Global South. This landmark document demands serious engagement from all who seek to understand the aspirations of developing nations.

The road ahead will require careful navigation of geopolitical tensions and domestic reforms. Yet the direction is clear. Latin America is embracing a multipolar world where development, not alignment, is the priority. With Colombia's entry, the Belt and Road Initiative's vision of a connected Global South moves closer to reality, one where shared growth defines the future.

In this new era of cooperation, China and Latin America are not just building infrastructure; they are laying the foundations for a more equitable global economy.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Rare earth curbs rightly remain in place

Despite the great lengths the United States has gone to in a bid to diversify its suppliers of rare earths and other key mineral resources, it still relies on China, the world's largest rare earths producer and exporter, for them.

Recent discussions about whether China might adjust its export policies on strategic minerals have drawn global attention, but its authorities have clarified that existing restrictions will continue.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce told the media on Wednesday that the national export control coordination mechanism office has now strengthened the full-chain control of strategic mineral exports, emphasizing its focus on compliance and lawful trade. The office held a special meeting in Changsha, Hunan province, on Monday to deploy relevant measures to plug the loopholes in the illegal outflow of strategic minerals.

The full-chain supervision system involves strict monitoring of the mining, smelting, processing, transportation, manufacturing, sales and exports of strategic minerals. Local governments are expected to speed up the registration and record-keeping of enterprises related to strategic minerals in their locality, and ensure that the control measures are implemented as required.

Since China implemented export controls on strategic minerals such as gallium, germanium, antimony, tungsten, and medium and heavy rare earths, some overseas entities have colluded with domestic personnel acting illegally to continuously change the smuggling methods for the strategic minerals in an attempt to evade the export restrictions.

Authorities noted that evolving tactics to circumvent these policies have necessitated tighter oversight. And these steps align with efforts to standardize international trade practices.

While some foreign analyses have drawn parallels to recent global trade dynamics, China's measures are taken with the purpose of safeguarding resources and national interests,

reflecting a long-term strategy for strengthening security and boosting sustainable development.

The US has expressed concerns about the impact of the restrictions on industries ranging from defense to renewable energy, given China's dominant role in rare earths processing. More than 90 percent of rare earths are currently smelted and processed by China.

But the US should reflect on the dilemma that is of its own making. China has every reason to impose the restrictions given the harsh boycotts and sanctions imposed on it by the US and its allies in almost all strategic sectors.

China unveiled regulations strengthening the administration of rare earths in June last year. The regulations, which came into force in October, specify punishment for illegal activities in areas such as rare earths mining, smelting and extraction, product distribution, as well as unlawful imports and exports. Also, China released stricter export control measures on certain items related to seven types of medium and heavy rare earths on April 4, after the US raised its punitive tariffs on Chinese goods to exorbitant levels.

That China suspended its unreliable entity measures against dozens of US entities for 90 days, starting on Wednesday, aligns with the consensus reached at the Geneva trade talks between China and the US, and indicates China's sincerity in trying to improve bilateral relations. The move means China has actually broadened the US' access to its dual-use minerals during that period. But the US entities must behave themselves during the 90-day window of opportunity to show they are not intent on challenging China's red lines.

It should be clear to all countries that as long as entities are not engaged in activities that undermine China's sovereignty, national security or development interests, the export control measures will not affect their normal business operations and trade activities, let alone the stability and security of international industry and supply chains.

Like any other country, China will never allow the party eating from its bowl to smash the pot.

What They Say

UK should pay no heed to disruptions

Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom Zheng Zeguang attended the 2025 Sino-UK Entrepreneur Forum on Wednesday.

In his keynote speech at the event, Zheng introduced China's latest development in high-tech industries, particularly those related to artificial intelligence, and highlighted the huge potential of Sino-UK collaboration in the field that has largely remained unleashed.

Hosted by The 48 Group in the United Kingdom, a London-based private company dedicated to promoting trade between China and the UK, and China Daily, the forum, themed "Smart Decisions for Smart Technologies", gathered nearly 200 participants from the British government, financial, trade, science and education sectors to promote Sino-UK cooperation and exchanges.

In recent years, China has been making efforts to improve the top-level design and strengthen the overall planning for the systematic and comprehensive advancement of the country's AI capabilities.

At the same time, the country has multiplied its efforts to advance technological innovation, industrial development and application in all sectors, so that it can maintain the initiative in AI development and governance.

China is home to over 4,500 AI-related enterprises, with the core AI industry valued at nearly 600 billion

yuan (\$83.21 billion) and the AI chip market exceeding 150 billion yuan. In 2024, AI patent applications from China accounted for 61.5 percent of the global total.

Technologies represented by AI are fostering new industries and business models, and transforming traditional industries. They have also helped propel the Chinese economy to the higher-end of the value chain, and made it smarter and greener.

According to Zheng, the added value of China's new industries, new business formats and new business models accounted for over 18 percent of its GDP last year. The number of Chinese enterprises utilizing AI technologies grew by over 37 percent, covering R&D, production and sales.

China is now the world's largest renewable energy market and equipment manufacturer, the largest exporter of clean technology, and leads the world in installed renewable energy capacity.

The more suppression China faces from the United States and its allies in the high-tech field, the more resolved the nation becomes to pursue breakthroughs in core technologies, and self-reliance in strategic industries.

For instance, to promote basic research in AI and other emerging technologies, China is integrating AI sci-tech innovation with industrial innovation, and building an enter-

prise-led innovation ecosystem that fosters synergy among businesses, universities, research institutes and end users.

Against the current backdrop of rampant unilateral bullying, China and the UK can work together to not only defend a fair and just world trade order but also ensure the research and development as well as the application of cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, do not become a new arena for geopolitical struggles.

Deepening Sino-UK cooperation in AI technology would serve both sides' common interests and also send a clear message to other major economies that AI technology should be a field of mutual learning and collaboration for not only the advancement of the technology but also the formation of an inclusive, dynamic and effective global governance system of the sector.

The UK, host of the 2023 AI Safety Summit, has been an active promoter of such a global governance framework for AI technology.

The UK government should be well aware China is a partner, not a rival. The momentum of improvement and easing in China-UK relations has not come easily and should be cherished.

China is willing to work with the UK to overcome various disruptions and distractions and steer bilateral relationship steadily forward.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC4A 3DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1400 Broadway, Suite 2000,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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COMMENT

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China-CELAC agri-cooperation fruitful

Chinese President Xi Jinping has once again stressed the importance of agriculture and food cooperation in his speech delivered at the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum on Tuesday.

At the third China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Ministerial Forum on Agriculture, held in Weifang, Shandong province in July 2024, the participants realized the need to further strengthen food security and promote sustainable agricultural development.

The forum, which I attended as Grenada's minister for social and community development, housing and gender affairs, also decided to organize tours and demonstrations so the participants could get a thorough idea of how farming is done in China. While the tours exposed participants to the varieties of crops grown in Weifang, the demonstrations enhanced the knowledge of the participants from the Global South on different agricultural practices.

Since Grenada's is mainly an agricultural economy, the country, along with other Global South nations, benefits from overall China-CELAC cooperation on sustainability and innovation of agricultural practices. China is making concerted efforts, including mechanizing agriculture and introducing new crop varieties, to promote low-carbon and eco-friendly practices. In fact, many Global South countries are already benefiting by adopting a new approach to development after learning from China's policy of successfully eradicating absolute poverty.

China continues to help countries of the Global South in alleviating poverty and realizing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger. The Government Information Services in March said that Grenada's Ministry of Agriculture received a new consignment of machinery and farm equipment which farmers could use to improve their agricultural practices and increase their per-hectare yield.

By ensuring food security and promoting sustainable agricultural practices, the agriculture sector of Grenada can focus on improving its efficiency and increasing its per-hectare crop yield. In turn, higher food production will strengthen the fight against poverty and help realize SDGs 1 and 2.

It is evident that cooper-



There is much experience to be learned from China's approach to food security and sustainable agricultural development, not to mention the country's successful eradication of absolute poverty.

ation between China and the CELAC countries has increased trade and economic exchanges between the two sides. As the Grenada government continues to take measures to reduce poverty by better safeguarding food security, Grenadians view China as a very important

partner, which provides technical assistance, farm machinery and financial inputs to improve agricultural practices in Grenada.

In Grenada, there is a sense of renewed commitment on the part of local farmers, because the country's government is now able to extend more help to them thanks to Chinese investment and aid. Since poverty alleviation is a top priority for the government and people of Grenada, the country has adopted universal poverty reduction and social protection policies that are related to the unique experiences of the people. However, food security remains a challenge, although we hope to further improve the situation by leveraging Chinese aid and assistance aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture development.

We should keep in mind, though, that agricultural production is seasonal. As the Food and Agriculture Organization says, after a short harvest period, products are often unstable, difficult to sell. As a result, more cold storage facilities are being built in major production areas.

By building more cold storage facilities, Global South countries will not only be

able to prevent wastage of food and thus better safeguard food security and promote sustainable agriculture but also strengthen their fight against poverty.

The trade agreements between China and CELAC countries are beneficial to both sides because their economies are complementary, offering high-quality agricultural products such as soybean, corn, beef, cherries, avocados, blueberries and wine to China, and getting superior consumer products and technologies from China. This relationship is a win-win, and the only thing it will cost is food insecurity.

There is much experience to be learned from China's approach to food security and sustainable agricultural development, not to mention the country's successful eradication of absolute poverty. Countries of the Global South do have a great opportunity to benefit from the practices of China and ensure food security.

The author is minister for social and community development, housing and gender affairs of Grenada.

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



Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Beginning of the end of trade war good for all

Many are debating whether the China-US agreement reached at their trade talks in Geneva, Switzerland, over the weekend and taking effect on Wednesday is a win for China or the United States.

The White House fact sheet on the talks claims that US President Donald Trump "secures a historic trade win" for the US. But some US news media outlets said it's a win for China. Even former US Treasury secretary Larry Summers said on X that Trump "blinked first".

These people are all wrong. The agreement, which may begin the end of this round of trade conflicts, will be a win-win for China, the US and the rest of the world.

Since the global economy, especially the Asia-Pacific region's economy, is highly integrated, a suspension of the tariff war between China and the US means good news for traders, manufacturers, investors, retailers and consumers across the world. The decision arrived at by the world's two largest economies to drop the tariffs by 115 percent has already raised stock markets' indexes in the US and the Asia-Pacific.

The optimism is evident in the news headlines. A CNBC report on Tuesday read: "US-China tariff reprieve is enough to get products on the shelves in time for Christmas", while a CNN headline on Wednesday said: "Tariffs devastated America's ports. Soon, they could face a surge from stockpiling".

The outcome of the trade talks is encouraging given the high tensions that preceded the talks and the relatively low expectation by the US news media and pundits.

There is hope that the 90-day reprieve could be extended permanently. And as proved by the huge economic damage the tariff war has inflicted on the US, China and other economies over the past months, trade and tariff wars produce no winners and should never be launched.

The outcome of the trade talks is encouraging given the high tensions that preceded the talks and the relatively low expectation by the US news media and pundits.

As a journalist who covered the proceedings in Geneva, the outcome came as a delightful surprise to me as I listened to Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng speaking at the Sunday evening press conference, and the talk on TV by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

It has been long since government officials from the two countries praised each other for their professionalism, diligence and competence due to the toxic rhetoric of the Joe Biden administration. It has also been long since both sides claimed their talks had made substantial progress, leading to some important consensus.

It was especially comforting to see the two sides agreeing to launch a consultation mechanism on trade and economic issues to address each other's concerns. It reminds people of the 90 high-level dialogue mechanisms that existed between the two governments several years ago, from the Strategic and Economic Dialogue to the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade, which I covered extensively during my more than eight years of assignment in the US.

Those mechanisms played a great role in enhancing exchanges and communication between the two governments and in addressing bilateral concerns. Many of them could and should be revived as part of the new mechanism to be established.

Back in December, then US president-elect Trump told a press conference at Mar-a-Lago that "China and the United States could work together to solve all the problems of the world". That is true especially when it comes to addressing global challenges — from maintaining global economic stability and prosperity to fighting terrorism, combating climate change and ensuring global peace.

But to achieve that, it is imperative that China and the US resolve their differences and disputes through the new mechanism of consultation instead of resorting to tit-for-tat trade and tariff wars. The Geneva talks were a good start for the two sides to put bilateral relations on the right track.

As Chinese leaders and diplomats have repeatedly said, cooperation is in the interest of both China and the US while confrontation hurts both. There is no better option for the two sides than cooperation.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Henrique Couto da Nóbrega

Education and innovation bring distant friends closer

Ten years ago, the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum was established with the ambitious goal of fostering closer relations between China and the LAC countries in a respectful and lasting manner.

The first ministerial meeting was held in Beijing in early 2015, marking the creation of a new regional bloc aimed at promoting cooperation to boost economic development, and the fourth, too, was held in Beijing on Tuesday and attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Reflecting on this journey, I see beyond diplomatic protocols and trade data — I see stories created by people: the teachers, students, researchers, engineers, farmers and young entrepreneurs who believe in the power of knowledge and international cooperation.

The trade data are pretty impressive. China has become Brazil's leading trade partner, with the bilateral trade volume exceeding \$150 billion. A large percentage of Brazil's soybean, iron ore, and oil are shipped to Chinese ports. In return, Brazil receives advanced technologies, electric vehicles, equipment to generate renewable energy, and investment in infrastructure. But more valuable than the impressive figures is the two sides' mutual commitment to promote education and innovation, and improve people's livelihoods.

As president of the Brazil-China Friendship Association, I have closely observed this phenomenon, witnessing unprecedented enthusiasm for mutual learning. Brazilian universities, such as



In this scenario, cooperation in education, and science and technology takes center stage. The CBERS program, a joint Sino-Brazilian space initiative, exemplifies this strategic partnership.

the Rio de Janeiro State University where I also teach, have established strategic partnerships with prominent Chinese institutions, including Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Guangdong University of Technology, and Nanjing Forestry University.

These agreements facilitate academic exchanges and joint research. João Carlos, a Brazilian environmental engineering student, exemplifies this collaboration: he returned from China fluent in Putonghua, his mind brimming with innovative approaches to sustainable waste management.

The digital transformation, the rise of artificial intelligence and the global envi-

ronmental goals have created both challenges and opportunities. Companies such as BYD, currently building an electric vehicle factory in Bahia, Brazil, create not only jobs but also require highly skilled professionals. Projects such as Ferrogrão, a 933-kilometer railway linking Sinop (Mato Grosso) to the port of Miriutuba (Pará) in Brazil, illustrate this growing need for technical training and higher education.

In this scenario, cooperation in education, and science and technology takes center stage. The CBERS program, a joint Sino-Brazilian space initiative, exemplifies this strategic partnership. After decades of collaboration between space agencies and universities of the two countries, the CBERS program has enhanced Brazil's strategic capability to monitor deforestation, climate change and agriculture with scientific precision.

Another notable example is digital connectivity. Huawei operates training centers in Brazil, having already trained more than 30,000 Brazilian nationals in advanced technologies, including 5G, cloud computing and AI. Last month, the China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation entered into a partnership with the Rio de Janeiro state government to establish a train maintenance center in Duque de Caxias, aimed at modernizing the railway system in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

But large-scale projects are not the only ones driving this partnership. Smaller initiatives, too, have had significant impacts: Brazilian teachers teaching Portuguese in

China, Chinese students hosting cultural events on the theme of Latin America, and academic centers debating sustainability. The Brazil-China Friendship Association participates in such initiatives, promoting student and cultural exchanges.

One standout initiative is the China-Brazil laboratory on climate change and renewable technologies, a collaboration venture between COPPE/UFRJ and Tsinghua University. The laboratory has conducted innovative research on clean energy and ways to mitigate the climate crisis.

Brazil has been taking measures to strike a delicate balance among various global interests. Amid global trade tensions, Brazil seeks to deepen its relations with China and the Global South, and advocates for autonomous, multipolar diplomacy based on mutual respect to address historic challenges including social inequality, energy transition and inclusive productivity.

As we celebrate a decade of the China-CELAC Forum, it is clear that the greatest legacy of a trade and economic partnership does not lie only in impressive trade figures and investments but also in the determination of the parties involved to build a shared future — where education, science and innovation serve as pillars of sustainable and inclusive development.

The author is the president of the Brazil-China Friendship Association.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



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

ERIK SOLHEIM

Luddite futility

The US cannot halt the transition to clean energy in which China is leading the way

Recently, I visited Yadea electric scooter company in Yongchuan, Chongqing. From the wonderful assembly lines, the competent staff makes one brand new electric scooter every few seconds. Yadea is the largest producer of electric scooters in the world. When visiting, two thoughts roamed in my head: first, China is the indispensable nation for the green transformation with an unparalleled industrial ecosystem; second, it is not easy for other countries to compete with China, so China needs to help other nations succeed.

The United States' imposition of tariffs on clean energy products threatens to disrupt the crucial supply chains of affordable green technologies. This is casting a shadow over global green development, especially in the Global South. The US has also terminated \$54 billion in overseas aid contracts and disconnected it from global efforts to protect the environment, fight diseases and defeat poverty.

However, despite the immense uncertainty generated by the US, my recent visits to India, China and other nations of the Global South have reinforced my conviction in the resilience of the global green transition and the rapidly emerging potential of South-South cooperation.

In this process, China's role is indispensable. Despite facing increased tariffs, China continues to unwaveringly pursue its climate ambitions. At the recent Leaders Meeting on Climate and the Just Transition co-hosted by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President Xi Jinping couldn't have been more explicit: "However the world may change, China will not slow down its climate actions, will not reduce its support for international cooperation." Such confidence and determination have driven China to establish the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable energy system. China has contributed approximately one-fourth of the world's newly added green spaces since 2000. Furthermore, China has reaffirmed its commitment to deepening South-South cooperation,

pledging continuous and extensive support for other developing countries.

Technological advancement and China's steadfast climate leadership position South-South cooperation as a crucial counterweight to the US' protectionism. At CATL in Ningde, Fujian province, the world's largest electric vehicle battery manufacturer, I witnessed groundbreaking advancements firsthand. Their latest battery can be charged in just five minutes for a driving range exceeding 500 kilometers, maintains 90 percent charge efficiency even at temperatures as low as -40 C, and significantly increases energy density while reducing costs. These are not mere incremental improvements, but a paradigm shift that will substantially accelerate the global adoption of electric vehicles. It makes electric transport the preferred option for the world's poor and rich alike.

In Chandauli district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, I observed a triple-win green success story: reduced pollution, effective climate action and improved rural livelihoods. Solar panels, the cells imported from China and assembled locally in India, are rapidly replacing expensive and highly polluting diesel generators. Owners of small grind mills now pay \$180 a month for electricity. The diesel bill was \$500. With innovative financing solutions to cover the upfront costs, solar is now by far the cheapest energy for the world's poor nations and peoples. You don't need to be an environmentalist to appreciate the drastic reduced costs of going solar.

However, critical challenges remain. Trade barriers will not only drag down global economic growth but may also complicate the technology transfer.

Transfer of technology doesn't happen at UN conferences or in government meetings. Technology transfer happens when a Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer such as BYD establishes electric car factories in Brazil or Turkey, or battery storage facility in Saudi Arabia. It happens when CATL invests in Hungary or when Yadea starts an electric scooter factory in Vietnam. China for many decades learned from Volkswagen and BMW, from Tesla and Siemens. We have now entered the era when Chinese companies have more to teach than to learn. More Chinese global investment will benefit both

China and the world. Foreign governments should roll out the red carpet. That's the best antidote to tariffs. It will create jobs in the Global South as well as in Europe.

Africa, the continent with most rapidly expanding population, is high on the Chinese agenda and low on the US agenda. The US has cut development aid to Africa and there are plans for US embassy closures. China has implemented zero-tariff treatment for least-developed countries with whom it has established diplomatic relations, while the US has ironically levered high tariffs on some small countries such as Lesotho which can hardly afford to buy anything from the US.

China has implemented numerous clean energy generation and grid projects across Africa, including South Africa's De Aar wind farm, Kenya's Garissa solar power plant and Rwanda's Nyabarongo II hydropower station. These projects serve as landmarks in local clean energy development. They also transfer technology and knowledge through clean energy cooperation.

The US' policies cannot hinder China-Africa cooperation; instead, they inadvertently push Africa closer to China. Some African nations may double up trade ties with China to compensate for their losses from deteriorating relations with the US, which may lead to further South-South cooperation.

Nearly half of China's green energy exports flowed into Global South markets in 2024, reflecting the growing importance of the Global South in China's economic strategy.

Ironically, the US' tariff policy primarily harms the US itself. The International Monetary Fund has recently downgraded the US economic growth forecast by a full percentage point from 2.8 percent growth in 2024, whereas the global average forecast was reduced by only half a percentage point to 2.8 percent for 2025, directly attributing this decline to the administration's protectionist policies. Global trade is not a zero-sum game but a mutually beneficial process for all involved.

The US seems to believe that it can stop the global trend toward green development through political decisions. Actually, that is no longer possible. Solar energy is the cheapest energy everywhere. Even in the US, 66 percent of new energy to the grid last year was solar. Electric cars are far more convenient than gasoline cars.

Trying to stop the Fourth Industrial Revolution of artificial intelligence and renewable energies is following in the footsteps of those in the past who were opposed to the steam machine, the car and train or the internet. Such historical leaders are not treated kindly by historians, they are called Luddites.

How should China respond? China must acknowledge every country aspires to develop its own industries. China should continue investing in other developing nations, with the Belt and Road Initiative serving as a critical vehicle for such investments. Through bilateral technology-sharing mechanisms, China can actively assist these countries in nurturing sustainable local industries, building domestic technological capacity, creating overseas employment opportunities, and embodying the spirit of reciprocity when China itself benefited from Western experiences.

Ultimately, the path forward must be built on multilateralism and cooperation, not isolation and unilateralism.

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 The author is former executive director of the Green Belt and Road Coalition and former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

LI YANG

Sustainable is the new developed

An evaluation system needs to be established to help countries identify how they can make greater progress toward the goal of sustainability

On Dec 14, 1960, Canada, the United States and 18 European countries signed a multilateral convention, establishing the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. From then on, they have called themselves developed countries, and most other countries have been classified as developing countries. After several decades, it seems that only a few countries from other continents, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, have been admitted into this "developed club" of Western nations.

But from that moment, many developing countries began to embrace the dream of becoming a so-called developed country. Obviously, they failed, despite the great efforts they have made to achieve that goal. The strange thing is, nobody has given a clear and precise definition of developed country, and no economic theory has systematically described that concept. Per capita GDP is deemed to be the main "criteria" to determine whether a country has the qualifications to be regarded as a developed country or not. That means, the reason why those countries are seen as developed is their seemingly higher level of wealth.

Ironically, this dream per se may not be as beautiful as those countries have wished. People seem to have forgotten some simple, yet unsavory, facts behind that wealth.

The relatively higher level of wealth of those so-called developed countries, to a great extent, stems from past colonial plunder and unreasonable international division of labor. Although the colonial economy has come to an end, the ex-colonial powers still occupy the upstream of the global industrial and value chains through a favorable international division of labor, which in fact is a blatant exploitation of poorer and weaker countries. This has given developed countries an advantage — they can take the lead in achieving traditional industrialization and, through it, accumulate wealth. But, traditional industrialization has overdrawn on the planet's natural resources and caused serious ecological and environmental harm, such as pollution of the atmosphere, water bodies and soil, extinction of species and the frequent outbreak of various infectious diseases. Now, Western countries still heavily rely on fossil fuel energy and have been reluctant to develop clean energy. They have adopted an irresponsible attitude toward participating in global actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The enviable "wealth" of many developed countries does not live up to their name, and at most only reflects one aspect of those countries. The severe wealth disparity makes higher per capita GDP have little to do with ordinary people. High inflation, low-quality and inefficient public services, ubiquitous racial discrimination, and serious social problems caused by moral decline and spiritual decadence have all greatly reduced the "wealth charm" of these countries. Additionally, even after the establishment of the United Nations, Western developed countries have still, individually or collectively, committed a large number of acts that violate the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and contemporary international legal norms, infringe on their internal affairs, and some even constitute crimes against humanity.

Under such circumstances, these developed countries have become saboteurs of international peace, stability, security and prosperity.

In spite of this, many countries are still vying to become developed countries and gain power by realizing traditional industrialization. But for most of those countries, if not all of them, this will remain an unattainable dream, since it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a developing country to complete its traditional industrialization based on fossil energy in today's international environment. That means, to some extent, the current developing countries may never have the opportunity to enter the developed club through traditional industrialization.

That is why some countries are opting to financialize their national economy as another way to join the club of developed countries. But in the long run, the negative impact of this approach will be unbearable for them. It will make the national economy a bubble, leading to the hollowing out of industries, the widening of the wealth gap between the rich and the poor, and reducing the size of the middle-income group.

Seeing such astonishing facts, people may inevitably have a strong feeling that the so-called developed countries are not qualified enough to serve as role models for other countries, both economically and morally. In 2015, all members of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in the realization that sustainable development in various fields and dimensions, including the sustainable development of the economy and human rights, sustainable development of the relations between countries and groups, sustainable development of populations, and sustainable development of the relationship

between humans and nature, is the key to resolving a series of global challenges. But only 16 percent of the 17 SDGs are expected to be realized by the target year, 2030. The reasons for the serious lag in progress toward the sustainable development goals compared to expectations are manifold, but it cannot be denied that one of the important reasons is that people are using outdated and unsustainable development methods to pursue future sustainable development goals.

In a nutshell, to truly achieve global sustainable development, the international community needs new, strong criteria support, and sustainable development should be the common goal of all countries.

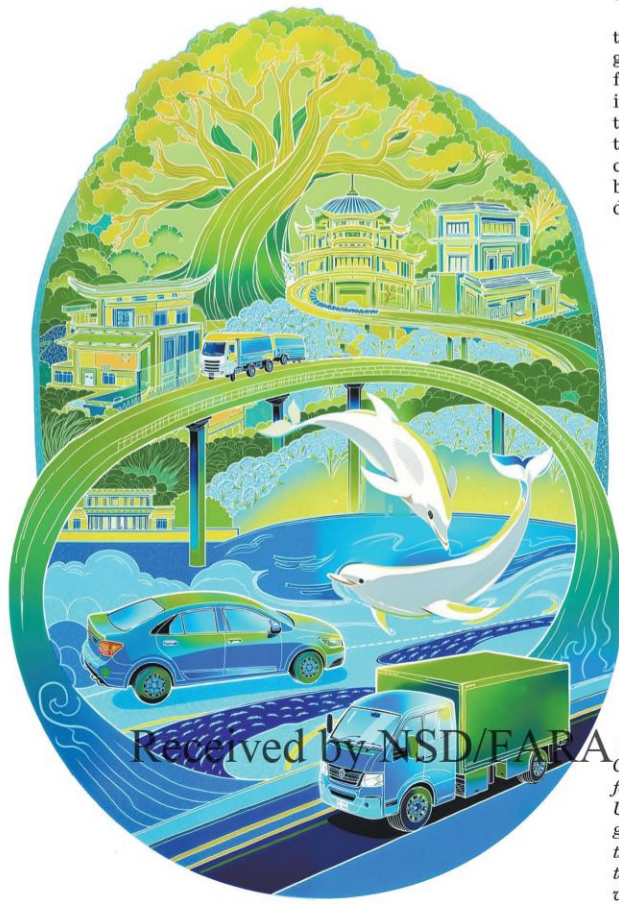
Given that currently there is no country that meets all the requirements for SDGs, countries today can be classified into the following categories: quasi-sustainable, relatively-sustainable, less sustainable and unsustainable.

A developed country that has not yet achieved sustainable development might be problematic and even destructive to the world. A "developing country" can also be closer to realizing sustainable development.

For the moment, a task of top priority is for relevant UN bodies to jointly develop a feasible indicator system and evaluation criteria for sustainable development, so that each country can be classified appropriately according to its development status, and know how to address the weak points in its pursuit of sustainable development.

The positive and encouraging side is, even before the indicator system and evaluation criteria have been worked out, a few countries have factually set good examples for the international community in pursuing sustainable development. China's high-quality development is essentially the pursuit of sustainable development. And China has achieved the most significant results in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has been taking the lead in eliminating poverty and protecting human rights, restoring and preserving the ecological environment, protecting biodiversity, controlling desertification, developing clean energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, rapidly advancing a green transformation in production and lifestyle. No one should doubt that China will become one of the first countries to realize sustainable development.

The author is former consul general of the People's Republic of China in Rio de Janeiro. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

WORLD

China-UK ties in technology emphasized

Forum speakers call for cooperation in AI, clean energy, digital infrastructure

By WANG MINGJIE in London
wangmingjie@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Leaders in artificial intelligence, clean energy, and digital infrastructure gathered in London on Wednesday for the 2025 Sino-UK Entrepreneur Forum, a high-profile event spotlighting innovation and cooperation between the two nations.

Held at the historic One Great George Street in Westminster, the forum, titled "Smart Decisions for Smart Technologies", focused on how emerging technologies are reshaping industries and how cross-border collaboration can support sustainable growth and innovation.

Jointly organized by the 48 Group and China Daily Europe, with support from the Chinese embassy in the UK, the event drew nearly 200 participants, including senior executives, policymakers, academics, and technology professionals.

Chinese Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang addressed the forum, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between China and the UK in the rapidly evolving tech landscape.

He highlighted China's significant progress in AI development, noting that China's AI development is characterized by expanding scale, flourishing innovation, improving computing power, and increasing application empowerment. These elements drive China's transition to a smarter, greener, and more advanced economy, he added.

He also underscored the role of international cooperation in shaping the future of AI. "We must extensively carry out international cooperation on AI, helping Global South countries strengthen their technological capabilities. This is China's contribution to bridging the global intelligence gap," he said. Additional speakers brought forth perspectives on the evolving Sino-UK relationship. Jack Perry Jr, chairman of the 48 Group, highlighted the need to approach collaboration not just with ambition, but with clarity.

"Trade today is no longer just about supply and demand," Perry said. He emphasized that rather than seeking capital alone, the UK must offer complementary value. "The UK now attracts more venture capital in AI than any other country in Europe. We're not just experimenting with AI. We are scaling it, commercializing it, and exporting it," he noted.

Reflecting on the evolution of China's global role, Perry Jr added, "China is no longer the underdog. It is confident, capable, and efficient at scale... That is why the UK-China relationship must be built on balance, not dependency, on shared innovation, not one-sided deals."

Sun Shangwu, deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily, who spoke on behalf of China Daily Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Qu Yingpu, acknowledged the UK's early contributions to AI through the pioneering work of Alan Turing and emphasized China's growing strength in this field, driven by national policies, vast digital ecosystems, and diverse real-world application scenarios.

"While AI has seen explosive

growth in the past two years, its roots can be traced back to the mid-20th century," Sun said. "Around the world, the AI landscape is blossoming with diversity. The flourishing of various models and applications proves that open collaboration is not just an ideal — they are the smart decision for the development of these smart technologies."

Timothy Hailes, managing director of Meridian Global Strategies, delivered a speech highlighting the deep historical and modern connections between the UK and China, emphasizing the importance of fostering partnerships for mutual progress.

He stressed the importance of internationalism in today's challenging world, where global cooperation is vital for prosperity. "History has proven time after time that we are more prosperous when we work together," Hailes said.

The forum featured two panel discussions.

The first session, "Smart Systems for a Smart World", explored the infrastructure needed for intelligent technologies.

When asked whether smaller, faster companies can outpace the giants, Su Hong, director of industries at Alibaba Cloud (UK, Ireland, and Nordics), said: "Smaller companies can still lead in specific industries, like translation. From our perspective, we're committed to long-term investments in AI and cloud infrastructure, with 380 billion yuan (\$52.73 billion) slated for the next three years. With this level of investment, we believe we can maintain our leadership position in the industry."

Bono Ge, UK and Ireland country manager of BYD, praised the UK as an open market for Chinese automakers. Unlike the EU, which imposed tariffs on Chinese carmakers, the UK government chose not to, a decision he described as "brave" and the right approach. He recalled that when BYD entered the market in 2013, London quickly embraced their electric buses, valuing the technology over any bias.

The second panel, "From Innovation to Impact", focused on the adoption of smart technologies across sectors. Panelists addressed issues such as underfunded innovations, regulatory bottlenecks, and the ethical responsibilities that come with deploying AI in public-facing systems.

Laurence Kembell-Cook, founder & CEO of Pavegen Systems, highlighted a key challenge in developing smart technology, noting: "The short-term challenge is money, mainly due to lack of confidence, but ultimately, it comes down to mindset — particularly in Europe."

In her closing remarks, Rebecca Yang, editor-in-chief of China Daily Europe, emphasized that the forum marks not an end but a beginning of deeper cooperation between the UK and China.

Yang highlighted that responsibility must guide innovation, ensuring that technological progress aligns with societal values and supports sustainable development.

Chen Yuehua and He Xiating contributed to this story.

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Palestinian children wait to receive food prepared by a charity kitchen in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. Gaza rescuers said Israeli strikes and shelling on Thursday killed 82 people in the war-battered Palestinian territory. MAHMOUD ISSA / REUTERS

APEC cuts economic growth forecast

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
kelly@chinadailyapac.com

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation on Thursday announced a significant cut in its growth forecast for the region for this year and urged action to eliminate policy uncertainty as trade officials of the bloc began a two-day meeting in South Korea.

Economic growth in the APEC region is expected to level at 2.6 percent in 2025 and to 2.7 percent in 2026, according to a report released by the APEC Policy Support Unit. This marks a sharp drop from the 3.1-3.3 percent growth figures forecast previously in March, and the 3.6 percent actual growth recorded in 2024.

"From tariff hikes and retaliatory measures to the suspension of trade facilitation procedures and the proliferation of nontariff barriers, we are witnessing an environment that is not conducive to trade," said Carlos Kuriyama, director of the APEC Policy Support Unit.

Rising protectionist moves and unfair trade practices — such as increased subsidies — have created an environment where firms are pausing decisions and holding back on cross-border activities, he said.

Economic and trade activity across the APEC economies has

also slowed considerably, with export volume projected to grow by just 0.4 percent and import volume by only 0.1 percent in 2025, according to the APEC report.

This marks a steep decline from 2024, when export and import volumes grew by 5.7 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively.

In addition, the report highlighted a rising wave of discriminatory nontariff measures, in particular subsidy measures that distort trade.

Challenging environment

The report was released as the 2025 APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting kicked off in the resort island of Jeju, South Korea, on Thursday. The two-day event is drawing attention as observers expect member economies to exchange views on how to face the challenging global trade environment, especially in the shadow of the United States' tariff policies.

In his opening speech, South Korean Trade Minister Cheong In-kyo said the multilateral trade system is undergoing a test and the role of APEC is more important than ever.

The sharp drop in APEC's growth forecast accounts for what has been happening in the last few months around tariffs, said Siah Hwee Ang, a professor of strategy

and international business and professorial chair in business in Asia at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Ang told China Daily that the actual growth may not fall by 1 percentage point after all as economies are becoming more self-reliant and some large ones can sustain production even if trade dips slightly.

"I expect to see more trade facilitation discussion on how APEC economies can work more closely together. There may be a lingering imperative to trade diversification to reduce risk," said Ang.

He said further discussion on other means of cooperation would be more productive at the ongoing APEC meeting. This includes reducing the impact of local content requirements, using trade to tackle domestic challenges and exploring trilateral trade agreements.

The APEC report also said that the current moment presents a critical opportunity for economies to double down on cooperation rather than retreating behind borders.

Restoring confidence in trade requires not only easing tensions, but also expanding into new markets, strengthening supply chain resilience and improving transparency of trade rules and procedures, it said.

Russian delegation arrives in Istanbul

ISTANBUL — A Russian delegation landed in Istanbul on Thursday for the first direct peace talks with Ukraine in more than three years, Russian state media reported, but without President Vladimir Putin.

Putin was not included on the list of Moscow's negotiating team published by the Kremlin late on Wednesday, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had challenged Putin to meet him in person at the talks.

A Ukrainian official told AFP that Zelensky planned to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, not Istanbul, later on Thursday, and only then would he decide his approach to the talks.

"The president starts his visit with Erdogan in Ankara and only then will the president decide on the next steps," the official said, after Russian state media reported Moscow's delegation had landed in Istanbul for the planned talks.

AFP reporters at the Dolmabahce Palace, where the talks are rumored to be taking place, saw hundreds of journalists waiting outside.

No time has been set for talks between officials from Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul, a Turkish foreign ministry source said on Thursday.

"No time has been set for a meeting yet. In this respect, there is no question of a postponement," the source said.

US President Donald Trump, who has been pushing for a swift end to the conflict, floated the possibility of attending the talks, and had called on Putin to turn up for the talks.

His Secretary of State Marco Rubio was to travel to Istanbul on Friday "for meetings with the European counterparts to discuss the conflict in Ukraine and other regional issues of mutual concern", the State Department said.

Trump said on Thursday he could still travel to Turkey if the first direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine make progress.

"You know, if something happened, I'd go on Friday," Trump said in Qatar, as a Russian delegation arrived in Istanbul for the talks without Putin.

Zelensky had been insisting on Putin's presence at the talks.

"This is his war... Therefore, the negotiations should be with him," he said in one statement.

Despite the flurry of diplomacy in a bid to end the conflict, Moscow and Kyiv's positions remain far apart and there has been little sign either is willing to make concessions.

Vladimir Medinsky, a former culture minister, leads the Russian delegation.

Ukraine has not named its delegation yet. Its Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha was in Turkey, meeting NATO foreign ministers at a gathering in Antalya.

Putin held a briefing with his negotiating team and Russia's top foreign policy and defense officials in Moscow on Wednesday before they departed for Istanbul, the Kremlin said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Food for thought

A man (center) carries a bag of rice purchased for 20 Philippine pesos (\$0.35) per kilogram at a government mini-market in Quezon City, Metro Manila on Thursday. The Philippines rolled out an affordable rice program launched to benefit senior citizens, single parents, persons living with disabilities and low-income families amid the rising prices of the food staple.

ROLEX DELA PENA / EPA-EFE

EU agrees on fresh sanctions against Moscow

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

European Union ambassadors from its 27 member states agreed on a new round of sanctions against Russia on Wednesday.

The 17th package of sanctions, which is expected to be formally approved by EU defense and foreign ministers meeting on May 20, targets some 200 Russian "shadow fleet" oil tankers. In addition, new restrictions will be imposed on 30 companies involved in the trade of dual-use goods, including some in Kazakhstan, Serbia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and the United Arab Emirates. A total of 75 individuals and entities will be listed for their links to Russia's military-industrial complex.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the

agreement on the new sanctions.

"We are further restricting access to battlefield technology. And we have listed an additional 189 shadow fleet vessels to target Russia's energy exports," she wrote on X on Wednesday, the same day that an EU court ruled she should have published text messages she exchanged with the CEO of Pfizer during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

"This war has to end. We will keep the pressure high on the Kremlin," she said.

Hungary, which has been against the EU's economic sanctions, did not oppose the measures, which are considered limited in scope.

In their Wednesday's meeting, the EU ambassadors also agreed on an export ban on chemicals used in missile production. They also agreed to impose sanctions on Russian judges and prosecutors

involved in so-called human rights violations.

A spokesperson at the European Commission expressed that more sanctions might be on the way if Russia does not agree to a ceasefire.

Possible targets

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday he was in favor of imposing new sanctions on Russia in the coming days if Moscow failed to agree to a ceasefire, singling out Moscow's financial services, and oil and gas as possible targets.

"Our intention is to impose new sanctions against Russia in the coming days" if Moscow refuses to implement a ceasefire, Macron said in an interview on TFI.

"We are coordinating in this regard," German Chancellor Friedrich

Merz this week proposed mounting sanction pressure if Russia keeps attacking Ukraine beyond a ceasefire proposed by Monday. Merz suggested seizing frozen Russia assets.

But EU diplomats told the media that discussions on a new EU package would take several weeks and would face difficulties in securing the necessary unanimity among the 27 member states.

The EU is also working on proposals to end fossil fuel imports from Russia by the end of 2027.

Von der Leyen told the European Parliament last week that fossil fuel revenues remain a "key source of funding" for Russia's military operations in Ukraine.

A study by energy think tank Ember finds that EU imports of Russian gas jumped by 18 percent in 2024 despite intentions to phase out Russian energy. The rise was propelled by increased imports into Italy, the Czech Republic and France.



Participants share their insights during the 2025 Sino-UK Entrepreneur Forum in London on Wednesday. XING YI / CHINA DAILY

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WORLD

Smiles bloom Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/03/2025 3:57:53 PM Xi congratulates Togo's new president



Four-year-old Ella dashes joyfully ahead of her aunt Lisa and uncle Vince through a sea of blooms at Tulipes.ca, a family-run farm boasting more than 800,000 tulips in full blossom in Laval, Quebec, Canada, on Wednesday. CHRISTINNE MUSCHI VIA AP

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping congratulated Jean-Lucien Savi de Tove on his inauguration as the president of Togo on Wednesday, pledging to promote ties between the two countries.

Xi also congratulated Faure Gnassingbe on his assuming office as the president of the Council of Ministers of the Western African nation on Wednesday.

In the congratulatory message, Xi said the friendly relations between China and Togo have been forged and nurtured by generations of leaders of both countries.

Over the past 53 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have consistently upheld sincerity, friendship, equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation, he said.

They have firmly supported each other on issues of their core interests and major concerns, setting an example of equality among countries, regardless of size, as well as unity and cooperation in the Global South, he added.

During the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing, China and Togo elevated their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership, opening a new

chapter in bilateral relations, he said.

Xi said he attaches great importance to the development of China-Togo relations and is willing to work with Togolese leaders to take the implementation of the FOCAC Beijing Summit outcomes as an opportunity to carry forward the traditional friendship, expand cooperation in various fields, and enrich the connotation of the comprehensive strategic partnership, so as to deliver more benefits to the people of both nations.

Also on Wednesday, Premier Li Qiang sent a congratulatory message to Gnassingbe on his assuming office as president of Togo's Council of Ministers.

Currency swap deal boon for Argentina

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires, Argentina
For China Daily

Argentina's renewal of a \$5 billion currency swap with China, despite opposition from the United States, has given a boost to the country's economic recovery and underscored a financial partnership that continues to "expand out of necessity," analysts say.

The April 10 extension spares Argentina from repaying \$5 billion to China this year — a critical relief as it grapples with a severe dollar shortage and persistent inflation. The deal came just a day before the International Monetary Fund approved a new \$20 billion bailout package for Argentina.

The currency arrangement, in place since 2009, highlights Beijing's growing economic ties with Buenos Aires, said Alejandro Marco del Pont, an Argentine economist and international relations expert.

"China is investing in railway transportation, hydroelectric dams and the Atucha III nuclear plant — a joint Chinese-Argentine project," he said. "Their interest in the Strait of Magellan for future maritime logistics

between the Atlantic and Pacific is another US concern."

In 2023, China was Argentina's second-largest trading partner after Brazil, leading in purchases of key Argentine exports such as soybean, meat and lithium.

The US has strongly opposed Argentina's currency swap deal with China. Mauricio Claver-Carone, the State Department's special envoy for Latin America, threatened to withhold IMF support unless Argentina distanced itself from China.

Argentine President Javier Milei had previously moved to "cool" down its relationship with China, said Sebastian Schulz, a sociologist and expert in Chinese studies at the National University of La Plata.

Practical considerations

However, practical economic considerations have maintained bilateral trade ties on a solid footing. Marco del Pont said Argentina's economic relationship with China continues to "expand out of necessity."

Schulz agreed, saying that trade flows, mining investments and financial cooperation — including the currency swap — remain active. "The relationship with China

remains structurally important to Argentina's economy," he said.

Argentina's economic crisis has reinforced its need for Chinese financial support. The currency swap deal has evolved into an important lifeline for the country's economy.

"It enables foreign trade without straining official dollar reserves, potentially limiting price increases in key sectors," Schulz said. "It also helps stabilize the economy by boosting central bank reserves — and notably, China imposes no conditions on Argentina's economic policies."

Marco del Pont said the deal helps Argentina manage immediate currency pressures, curb inflation on imports and secure essential inputs such as machinery from China.

However, it remains a stopgap measure rather than a solution to Argentina's fundamental economic problems, he added.

"It offers temporary liquidity but doesn't address Argentina's structural problems — the lack of market confidence and the underlying dollar shortage — even in the context of the IMF program framework."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Forum charts path for solid South-South ties

Latin America, the Caribbean embrace China's pragmatic, inclusive initiatives

By YANG RAN in Beijing,
EDITH MUTETHYA
in Nairobi, Kenya and
YANG GAO in Toronto

The fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum has produced concrete outcomes and injected fresh momentum into collaboration between the two sides, with experts and a senior diplomat highlighting its significance for global development.

In a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the meeting in Beijing on Tuesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the launch of five programs aimed at advancing shared development and revitalization with Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The initiatives — focusing on solidarity, development, civilization, peace and people-to-people connectivity — provide a clear road map for deepening cooperation and advancing common goals. The meeting also adopted the Beijing Declaration and the China-CELAC Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Key Areas (2025-27).

Uruguay's Foreign Minister Mario Lubetkin, speaking at a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday, commended the initiatives for their comprehensive nature and long-term significance for the development of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. He also expressed his appreciation for China for hosting the meeting.

Lubetkin said Uruguay and the broader Latin American and Caribbean region look forward to deepening cooperation and friendly relations with China.

The newly proposed initiatives align with Uruguay's national conditions and needs and reflect the aspirations of its people, he said.

"We hope to see concrete outcomes from these initiatives that will further advance our people's development."

In addition, he applauded China's three global initiatives, affirming firm support for the Global Development Initiative. "The GDI is what Global South countries have been looking forward to, enabling us to work and develop together with China over the next two to three decades," he said.

Development needs

Uruguay attaches great importance to the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, calling the latter especially relevant for Uruguay's strategic development needs, he said. "In the face of a volatile international landscape, we must actively work through such forward-looking initiatives to foster a more balanced global order."

Lubetkin also praised China's development achievements and their positive effect on Uruguay. "China plays a pivotal role on the world stage, serving as a key driver of global economic growth. Its successful development mechanisms

offer valuable insights for Uruguay," he said, adding the country is keen to study China's experience.

Luciano Campos, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina and a senior economist at Numenta Analytics in Canada, said the outcome of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum signals deepening of China-Latin America ties, going beyond economics.

The gathering aims to strengthen political trust and cultural ties while fostering a broader cooperative relationship based on equality, mutual benefit and shared development, he added.

James Shikwati, founder and director of the think tank Inter Region Economic Network in Nairobi, Kenya, said Xi's keynote speech resonated well beyond the intended audience.

"It struck a chord across the Global South who see China as a predictable partner and whose messaging reflects their own aspirations for multilateralism, global justice and a world order not dominated by a single hegemonic power," he said.

"In a world fractured by geopolitical tensions... and the United States' tariffs, President Xi's appeal for a shared future and solidarity carries a message of hope for unity and reforming of global governance."

The call to treat developing countries as equal stakeholders, rather than peripheral players, assuages long-standing frustrations across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, he added.

Contact the writers at
yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn



Choking smoke

A plume of smoke rises from a chemical products warehouse at the La Red industrial park in Alcala de Guadaira, Spain, on Wednesday. The blaze started "apparently" because of "a spark" in a tank containing a "quite toxic" product, said Mayor Ana Isabel Jimenez Contreras.

ROCIO RUZ VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

LIBYA Fresh gunbattles erupt in Tripoli after brief lull

Fresh gunbattles erupted on Wednesday in the Libyan capital Tripoli between two armed groups, a security official said, a day after authorities declared the fighting over. Clashes flared between the Radaa force and the 444 Brigade in key areas of the city, including the port, the source said. Fighting

eased toward the end of the day, according to television reports and residents who spoke to AFP, with some bakeries opening but schools remaining shut.

UNITED KINGDOM Govt holding talks with nations over migrants

The United Kingdom is in talks with different countries about setting up "return hubs" for failed asylum-

seekers, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Thursday on a visit to Albania seeking to bring down immigration. "We are in talks with a number of countries about return hubs," Starmer told a joint news conference with his Albanian counterpart Edi Rama. Starmer declined to explain how the hubs would work in practice or say with which countries he was in talks.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



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LIFE

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When the famous Venetian explorer Marco Polo visited Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in the late 13th century, well-traveled as he was, it is said that he was still filled with amazement and overwhelmed by what he saw.

In his seminal account of his journey, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, he called Hangzhou the "city of heaven", describing it as "beyond dispute the finest and the noblest in the world".

Some 700 years after Polo's death, a major exhibition about the man and his legacy opened on May 8 in the city he so admired.

Titled *Viaggio Di Conoscenza: "Il Milione" Di Marco Polo E La Sua Eredità Fra Oriente E Occidente* or *A Journey of Knowledge: The Travels of Marco Polo and Its Legacy Between East and West*, the exhibition includes 84 rare artifacts from between the 13th and 20th centuries, on loan from 11 Italian museums and cultural institutions, including manuscripts, oil paintings, sculptures, jewelry, ceramics, glassware and textiles.

"Not by chance, the exhibition is being held in Hangzhou, a city symbolically close to Italy, as already captured in the accounts of the great Venetian traveler," said Massimo Ambrosetti, the Italian ambassador to China, at the opening ceremony.

"The vivid portrayals in *The Travels of Marco Polo* are an authentic 'journey of knowledge', in which Marco Polo depicts cities, thriving markets, different peoples, wealth, technology, and the high level of cultural refinement of a then largely unknown part of world, helped shape a lasting perception of China and the East in Europe," he said.

"His chronicles sparked widespread curiosity in medieval Western Europe toward China and the marvels of the Orient, a fascination that endured for centuries," Ambrosetti added.

Divided into six parts, the exhibition retraces the thrilling expedition of Polo and his fellow explorers along what later became known as the Silk Road through their own perspectives, presenting the stories of cultural exchange and integration that occurred along the way.

It focuses on the power of narrative, said the organizers of the exhibition.

In an era when information about distant lands was gleaned through written and oral accounts, Marco Polo's chronicles were a captivating primary source of knowledge



A visitor looks at an oil painting at the exhibition *A Journey of Knowledge: The Travels of Marco Polo and Its Legacy Between East and West* in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 8. QI XIAO / CHINA DAILY

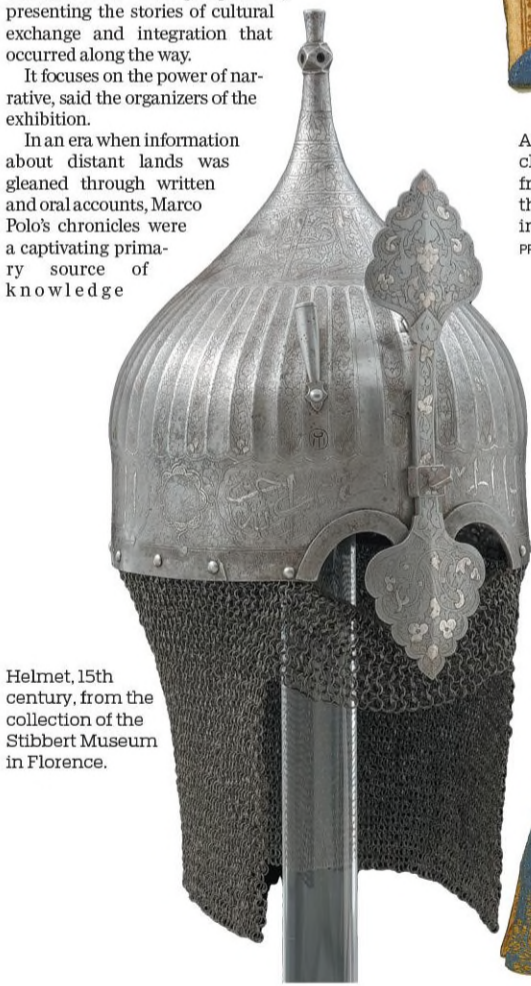
Following in the footsteps of Polo

Exhibition dedicated to famous traveler's voyages traces the enduring influence of East on West, **Chen Ye** reports in Hangzhou.



A late 17th-century child's long coat from the collection of the Stibbert Museum in Florence. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Enameled copper plate, late 15th century to early 16th century, from the collection of the Correr Civic Museum in Venice.



Helmet, 15th century, from the collection of the Stibbert Museum in Florence.



Contact the writer at chenye@chinadaily.com.cn

The exhibition will run until July 31.

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union, and the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Italy, the exhibition will help deepen bilateral relations, Ambrosetti said.

"Today, just as seven centuries ago, cultural exchange between Italy and China continues to flourish, sustained by a shared awareness of the profound significance of the bridge that Marco Polo, through his extraordinary journey, helped build," he said. "The intellectual journey inherent in the exhibition will serve as a further stimulus to renew the commitment in Italy and China to cultivate mutual understanding."

What's on



Success by design

Lei Guiyuan (1906-89) is considered the father of modern Chinese design. He heralded the modernization of Chinese design, founded the country's first designer group, the Shanghai Industrial Artists Association, in 1934, and published several books on the subject based on his study of traditional handicrafts and antiques.

He was also dedicated to the cultivation of homegrown designers, serving as the first deputy head of the Central Academy of Arts and Design, now Tsinghua University's Academy of Arts and Design.

Salute to Design, at the Guan Shanyue Art Museum, in Shenzhen.

Guangdong province, reviews Lei's accomplishments, showing his manuscripts, drafts, paintings, calligraphic pieces, ceramics and textiles based on his designs. The exhibition runs until May 25.

Lei lived in France for two years in the late 1920s. He also reached out to the Chinese tradition for inspiration. By mixing the East and the West, he hoped his work, as a designer and a teacher, could modernize the look of his country, and create new lifestyles for his people. He believed that whether it is about carrying forward traditions or learning from other cultures, designs should first cater to daily needs.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 6026 Hongli Lu, Futian district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province. 0755-8306-3086.

World of animation

Qi Baishi (1864-1957), one of the foremost ink artists of 20th-century China, left an immense body



of paintings of varied motifs including landscapes, figures and small lives in nature. The last category has remained the most popular among Qi's followers who are delighted with creatures such as shrimps, chickens and insects in which the artist injected vigor and his take on life.

Beijing Fine Art Academy, which houses a rich collection of Qi's works, has invited three students from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and the Luxun Academy of Fine Arts in Shenyang, Liaoning province, to curate an exhibition at the academy's art museum, titled *Small Fish Goes*.

It highlights the perspective of the younger generation of appreciating Qi's art in a new context. The trio have introduced animation and installations to allow visitors to understand Qi's perspective of the natural world in his garden, as well as that of the

fishes in his pond. The exhibition runs until June 15.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 12 Chaoyang Gongyuan (Park) Nan Lu, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-6502-5171.

Feast for the eyes

Tianjin Museum is celebrating the history, variety and creativity of China's lacquer art at *Chromatic Splendours of Lacquer Art*, a long-term show of selected lacquer objects in its assembly of art and crafts.

Lacquer wares stand in evidence of the advances of human intelligence to utilize the juice of nature, manual dexterity and imagination.

The exhibition focuses on the complicated working procedures and a variety of techniques that have been developed in different regions and of various time periods, including the tools for use and how the raw lacquer would be



processed. It focuses on the time and patience artists have to invest in their work.

9 am-4:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 62 Pingjiang Dao, Hevi district, Tianjin. 022-8388-3000.

Modernity meets majesty

Shenzhen, Edinburgh bond breaks mold, brings out the new CITY DANCE, PAGES 8-9



Huawei unveils own OS to power new computers BUSINESS, PAGE 5



Rising stars

Young performers hone craft to uphold Peking Opera's legacy LIFE, PAGE 16

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Compilation of 15th Five-Year Plan prioritized

Xi stresses high-quality formulation of national economic and social advancement blueprint

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has stressed sound, democratic and law-based decision-making to ensure that China's next five-year plan for national economic and social development is formulated in a high-quality manner.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in a recent instruction on work concerning the compilation of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30).

Xi noted that the scientific formulation and consistent implementation of five-year plans stand as important experiences in the Party's approach to governing the country.

The formulation and implementation of the 15th Five-Year Plan hold immense significance for fully realizing the strategic initiatives outlined at the 20th CPC National Congress and advancing Chinese modernization, he said.

Five-year plans serve as comprehensive blueprints for China's economic and social advancement, outlining the goals, strategies and priorities across various sectors for each respective period.

Featuring continuity, forward-looking strategic planning and effective implementation, the five-year plans have been instrumental in pushing forward the country's development in all sectors over the past decades since the launch of the first Five-Year Plan (1953-57).

As this year marks the conclusion of China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the nation will embark in 2026 on the implementation of the 15th Five-Year Plan for economic and social development.

The CPC Central Committee is organizing the drafting of proposals for the plan, and relevant departments are gearing up to solicit opinions and suggestions from officials and the public, as well as experts and scholars, through various channels in the near future.

Inside Experts said the 15th Five-Year Plan will hold special significance due to its dual role as both a blueprint for the nation's economic and social development over the next five years and a crucial bridge leading to the goal of achieving basic modernization by 2035. It is expected to emphasize accelerating the development of new quality productive forces to drive forward China's modernization drive, they said.

Cheng Xusen, a research fellow at Renmin University of China's National Academy of Development and Strategy, said that the upcoming 15th Five-Year Plan is expected to center on building up new quality productive forces, with expanding domestic demand, boosting consumption's role in economic growth, creating high-quality jobs and increasing household income being key priorities.

To drive growth, China will accelerate the intelligent and low-carbon transformation of traditional industries, while nurturing integrated clusters of strategic emerging industries, Cheng said, adding that the integration of digital technology into daily life will provide more equitable access to public services such as governance, education and healthcare.

Compared with five years ago, China faces greater uncertainties and challenges in the external environment, particularly due to the tariff and trade wars launched by the United States. The global governance landscape is facing greater instability, the international order may be subject to reshaping, and geopolitical conflicts and security risks are likely to increase, observers said.

Speaking at a symposium on the 15th Five-Year Plan in Shanghai on April 30, Xi highlighted the need to consider the impact of the changing international landscape on the country's socioeconomic development, adapt to changing situations and grasp strategic priorities in formulating the important document.

See Plan, page 3

Farewell to beloved bears



Top: A girl poses for a photo with a giant panda sculpture at Zoo Negara near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday. Giant panda pair Xing Xing and Liang Liang returned to China on Sunday after their 11-year stay in the Southeast Asian country. CHENG YIHENG / XINHUA **Above left and right:** The giant panda pair feed on bamboo on Sunday at the Ya'an base of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province. LI CHUANYOU / FOR CHINA DAILY **See story, page 4**

'MEMORY CLINICS' TURNING BACK 'SILVER TSUNAMI' OF DEMENTIA

Beijing's innovative programs take lead in fighting cognitive decline

By WEI WANGYU weiwangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

On a Thursday morning at Beijing's Baizhifang Community Health Center, 80-year-old Qian Zhirong carefully folds origami cranes under a doctor's guidance.

Six months earlier, she had experienced growing anxiety about behavior such as repeatedly check-



ing light switches, and feared the onset of early dementia.

Today, her laughter echoes through a "memory clinic" where cognitive screening has become as routine as blood pressure checks. She also practices "finger

gymnastics" on a daily basis — a simple exercise that researchers say helps preserve neural pathways.

These methods represent China's new front-line tactics in battling cognitive decline, with ordinary residents participating in Beijing's ambitious plan to establish over 20 community-based memory clinics by year's end.

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INSIDE Prominent pacesetters Global Views, page 13

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Industrial sector posts steady growth

By OUYANG SHIJIA ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

China's economic performance held steady against external headwinds, including the United States' tariff moves, with industrial production exceeding market expectations in April, data released on Monday showed.

Officials and analysts said that China's economic fundamentals remain solid and the country retains ample policy room and tools to navigate mounting external uncertainties.

With some countercyclical measures already in place and more on the way, analysts believe China is well-positioned for a stable recovery throughout the year. Potential policy steps may include additional issuance of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds and an expansion of consumer goods trade-in programs, they said.

According to figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's value-added industrial output increased 6.1 percent year-on-year in April, after a 7.7 percent growth in March, bettering a forecast of 5.5 percent in a Reuters poll.

"The April activity data shows con-

tinued resilience in industrial production," said Louise Loo, lead economist at British think tank Oxford Economics. "Export-driven gains in factory output may continue, given China's manufacturing competitiveness and front-loaded orders, before the end of the 90-day tariff agreement (reached by China and the US)."

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said that China's macroeconomy remained resilient in April despite the abrupt escalation of tariffs, primarily due to the forceful implementation of countercyclical policy measures this year.

"China's growth-stabilizing policies, including promoting programs for large-scale equipment renewals and trade-in deals for consumer goods and further supporting major national strategies, while building up security capacity in key areas, have helped support consumption and boost investment," he added.

According to the NBS data, retail sales increased 5.1 percent year-on-year in April, while fixed-asset investment rose 4 percent during the January-April period.

Wang warned that the impact of US tariffs might further weigh on

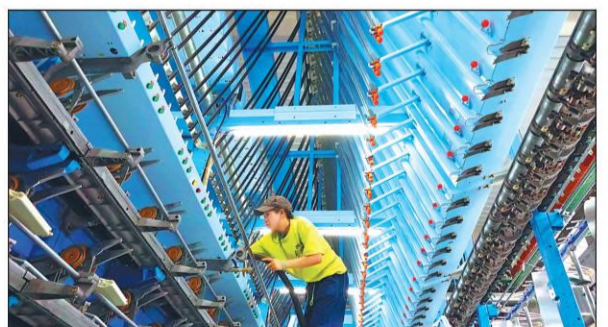
industrial output and dampen confidence in consumption and investment, but said he still expects the Chinese economy to maintain its resilience and continue growing, thanks to the ongoing macroeconomic policy support.

He pointed to China's new financial stimulus package, including interest rate cuts, liquidity injections, and targeted funding for consumption and technological innovation, as signs of Beijing's firm commitment to stabilizing the economy and financial markets amid external pressures.

Fu Linghui, a spokesman for the NBS, said that synchronized macro policies and proactive measures across the board have "bolstered China's confidence and capacity to meet various risks and challenges".

"In the next stage, we should adopt more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies, and the focus should be placed on stabilizing employment, enterprises, markets and expectations," he said on Monday at a news conference in Beijing.

The Chinese economy is expected to maintain a generally stable and steadily improving growth trajectory, supported by multiple favorable



A worker operates a new production line at a blanket-making workshop with upgraded texturing machines in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, on Monday. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

factors including a solid recovery foundation, strong stimulus measures, great consumption potential and strong impetus from innovation, Fu added.

Following China's stimulus measures, Nomura has raised its forecast for China's GDP growth in 2025 to 4.8 percent year-on-year, up from 4 percent.

"The truce reached in the US-China trade war is positive for China's economy, especially for the second quarter, as exporters might try to front-load their shipments before the 90-day pause ends," said Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura.

"On the other hand, retail sales — given the support of the expansion of the trade-in program — have been stronger than we thought they would be in the second quarter," Lu said.

Looking forward, Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities, said that more incremental policy steps are likely on the horizon, such as additional issuance of treasury bonds or local government special bonds, expanding the scope of large-scale equipment upgrade and trade-in deals in consumer goods programs, vigorous development of service consumption, and accelerated urban renewal initiatives.

WORLD WATCH By Esteban Zottelle

China-LAC infra deals fuel regional economies

China and the Latin American and Caribbean states have been fostering a virtuous relationship, including making concerted efforts to realize President Xi Jinping's proposal to build a community with a shared future for mankind. China has proposed win-win cooperation with the LAC countries, which is in stark contrast to the United States' policies. By imposing punitive tariffs on imports from its trading partners, especially China, and using other pressure mechanisms, the US is causing great difficulties for the region's economies, particularly for those that refuse to undermine their relationship with China.

The China-CELAC Forum, which held its fourth ministerial meeting in Beijing on May 13, is the first multilateral platform that includes China and all 33 countries in the LAC region. The forum has become a vital platform for dialogue between China and the LAC states and for boosting people-to-people relations between the two sides. With more advanced procedures and coordinated development plans, and deeper mutual understanding, the two sides have elevated their relationship to a higher level. More important, their relationship is based on equality, mutual benefit and openness.

Infrastructure improvement is key to economic progress; it helps attract more foreign investment, improve productivity, create jobs and raise people's incomes.

According to the fifth annual version of the Monitor of Chinese Infrastructure in Latin America and the Caribbean, published by the Academic Network of Latin America and the Caribbean on China, 268 infrastructure projects worth \$112.81 billion were carried out by China in the LAC countries from 2005 to 2023, which created more than 777,000 jobs.

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Inside

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PAGE TWO



Left: A woman undergoes rehabilitation at an elderly care service center in Laiguangying community in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Jan 10. **Middle:** Employees from the elderly care service center teach the elderly how to make handicrafts in October. **Right:** A man exercises at an elderly care guidance center in the capital's Dongcheng district on Oct 31. PHOTOS BY LI XIN / XINHUA

From page 1

With over 16 million dementia patients and others experiencing mild cognitive impairment, the country's "silver tsunami" poses unprecedented challenges. In Beijing, health authorities are bringing specialized care to residents' doorsteps through hospital-community partnerships.

At Baizhifang center, more than 100 seniors have undergone assessments since the beginning of this year. The process is streamlined, with initial screenings using standardized tests done at the community level. More complex cases are referred to Xuanwu Hospital or other specialist hospitals.

Post-diagnosis, patients return for customized rehabilitation — from memory games to resistance training.

Wang Yang, an associate professor at Peking University's China Center for Health Development Studies, said stable communities with established family doctor systems are ideal testing grounds. They transform primary care resources into measurable health gains.

The approach calms needless fears, like those experienced by Qian. "I'd stare at my door, unsure if I'd locked it," she recalled. Xuanwu Hospital's assessments revealed Qian was undergoing normal aging — a critical distinction.

"Many people panic over occasional forgetfulness. Communities should recognize true warning signs, which are symptoms like getting lost in familiar areas, or struggling with basic math," said Wang Hong, a professional caregiver who has worked to help Alzheimer patients for nearly two decades.

"We prescribe 'homework' (such as) daily mind-body exercises tracked through WeChat group chats, and they really work," Wang said, adding that family support also plays an important role in a patient's condition.

Michael Phillips, director of the Suicide Research and Prevention Center at the Shanghai Mental Health Center, said how families treat individuals with mental disorders significantly impacts their prognosis.

"Our research concludes that when families exhibit higher levels of criticism and resentment, patients show increased relapse rates and poorer treatment outcomes," he said.

"Conversely, families demonstrating more adaptability and a supportive, attentive attitude tend to positively benefit the patient's prognosis."

Wang Yichun, a psychological counselor in Shanghai, said in mental health healing, medications and psychotherapy alone are insufficient, and unsupportive environments often inflict secondary harm.

"Patients rely fundamentally on family understanding and patience, while community acceptance and resources bridge isolation. True recovery requires families and society to unite, offering warmth and strength to make healing achievable and sustainable," Wang said.

In Shanghai, 72-year-old Lu Fengjie embodies this philosophy. After his Alzheimer's diagnosis, his daughter transformed their apartment into a "memory sanctuary." Family photos were attached to cabinets, a favorite calligraphy brush was used to mark a wall calendar tracking his medication intake, and nightly storytelling sessions about his decades as a railway engineer were held.

By WEI WANGYU

In a sunlit activity room at Beijing's Kang Yuxuan Care Center, an 85-year-old woman named Guan, who was once confined to a hospital bed, now sits upright in a wheelchair, her hands rhythmically tapping a musical instrument.

Multiple intensive care unit admissions had left Guan's family desperate to avoid further medical interventions.

Her transformation, caregivers said, began not with advanced technology but through something far simpler: folding origami, the warmth of hand massages, and the freedom to eat from ceramic plates.

Guan's daughter recently asked about getting her mother dentures — a request that would have been unthinkable two years ago. The change in Guan and many other seniors is the work of Jin Enjing, a geriatrician whose long career has involved dementia care research in Japan, Sweden, and Harvard University in the United States.

Her approach, shaped by her own mother's harrowing experience with Alzheimer's in the mid-2000s, challenges China's traditional

Dementia: Nurturing memories, cultivating hope



Residents of the Shuiduizi community in Chaoyang district play musical instruments at the community's elderly care center on Nov 5. LI XIN / XINHUA

"We stopped correcting his confusion about dates," explains his son Lu Min, 45. "Instead, we touch on his vivid memories of 1980s train routes."

Six months into this tailored care, his cognitive scores stabilized, defying charts typically showing a decline.

Nearby, community volunteers replicate this approach through "reminiscence libraries" — curated boxes of memorabilia and cassette tapes of old songs that spark lucid moments in even advanced patients.

Architects of dignity

Beijing's dementia prevention framework closely aligns with the WHO's global action plan on the public health response to dementia, while incorporating its own adaptations.

Municipal guidelines, for instance, mandate the integration of traditional Chinese medicine diagnostics into cognitive assessments at community health stations.

A medical worker gives a massage to an elderly man at a community center in Chaoyang on Jan 9. LI XIN / XINHUA



Expert's quest to improve Alzheimer's care in China

elder care model, where safety protocols often override personal dignity. "Institutionalized care shouldn't feel like a prison sentence," she said. "Even the frailest deserve to live, not just exist."

The seeds of Jin's philosophy took root during a 2008 research project in Japan, where she studied that country's transition from hospital-dominated dementia care to community-based group homes. Later, in Sweden, she observed small-scale facilities designed as functioning households: residents cooked with real utensils, tended gardens, and gathered around pianos for impromptu singing.

These spaces prioritized sensory familiarity, such as soft lighting and wood walls, with no "clinical" odors. The settings were in stark contrast to the sterile, overmanaged environments she encountered back home.

"When you strip away everything that makes life feel like life," she said, "you accelerate decline."

Beijing has also pioneered cognitive rehabilitation hubs within residential committees, pairing AI-driven early screening tools with neighborhood volunteer networks to help seniors. This hybrid model also addresses China's rapidly aging population and familial caregiving traditions.

"Unlike the WHO's emphasis on pharmaceutical interventions, Beijing's dementia-friendly communities prioritize multigenerational cohabitation incentives and dementia literacy campaigns, reflecting Confucian values of familial responsibility," said Fa Cuiwen, a Tsinghua University medical sociologist.

"These innovations demonstrate how global health frameworks gain traction through culturally grounded implementation rather than direct policy transplantation," she said.

The "cognitive playground" is an innovation created by a community in Beijing's Sunhe town, Chaoyang district. By day, retirees navigate obstacle courses designed by neuroscientists — from stepping stones numbered in reverse, to memory exercises, and puzzle walls matching herbal medicine scents.

"When a society stops viewing care as a private burden, parks become therapy spaces and checkout clerks become front-line observers," she said.

As the Beijing sunset gilds Baizhifang's "memory garden" where patients tend plants labeled with therapeutic mnemonics, Qian shares her newfound mantra. "Growing old is not about fearing lost memories. It is about planting new ones, day by day," she said.

Expert's quest to improve Alzheimer's care in China



Jin Enjing, the geriatrician who established Beijing's Kang Yuxuan Care Center. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

At Kang Yuxuan, she has implemented a "four-leaf clover" framework. Rooms feature floor-to-ceiling windows to aid spatial orientation, while acoustic panels

dampen echoes that might confuse disoriented residents.

Patients participate in cooking classes using adaptive utensils, a calculated risk Jin defends fiercely. "A home isn't a home without the clutter of dishes," she said. "Our job isn't to eliminate hazards but to create safe autonomy."

Music and touch form the program's emotional core.

Weekly group sessions employ resonant instruments, which require minimal motor skills to play. Staff describe how one nonverbal patient began humming along to a 1960s folk song, triggering muscle memory that improved her swallowing. Another breakthrough came through Swedish-inspired tactile therapy: 20-minute hand-and-foot massages that eased joint contractures in bedridden patients by stimulating the production of oxytocin, a feel-good hormone.

"Pain isn't always physical," Jin said.

At dusk, the space is turned into an education hub, where pharmacy interns teach seniors to spot medication risks, and children earn "dementia ally" badges by learning communication techniques.

"My grandson now speaks slower and uses my old nickname," marvels 78-year-old patient Guo Wenjuan. "Before, he'd just sigh when I forgot things."

Investing in communities

Arthur Kleinman, a world-renowned psychiatrist and anthropologist at Harvard University, said a functional mental health ecosystem cannot thrive through institutionalization alone, but also demands investment in community networks that preempt crises.

"When hospitals close without parallel investment in neighborhood clinics, peer-support circles, and crisis de-escalation training for police, we trade one failure for another: overflowing jails replacing overcrowded wards," he told China Daily. "True reform lies not in abolishing institutions, but in ensuring communities become the first line of defense and sustained support."

Kleinman believes mental health systems must mirror the "cultural topography" they serve.

"Training grandmothers in rural villages as narrative therapists or adapting traditional mindfulness for dementia care isn't compromise; it's how global frameworks become locally vital," he said.

"The future of mental healthcare belongs to hybrid practitioners — village pharmacists trained to detect early cognitive decline, delivery drivers equipped with a crisis hotline, and retired teachers leading grief circles. Psychiatry's role isn't diminished but refocused, and supervising these distributed networks rather than gatekeeping care," he added.

Jin Enjing was a geriatrician at Harvard University before returning to China decades ago to improve care for Alzheimer's patients in Beijing.

"Effective dementia care begins by reimagining communal spaces as extensions of home," she said.

"We design neighborhoods with sensory anchors — gardens where patients cultivate herbs they recognize from childhood kitchens, communal kitchens with adaptive tools that honor muscle memory, and acoustic landscapes that buffer urban noise without isolating residents from life's rhythms. These aren't clinical compromises; they're bridges to preserved personhood," she said.

Jin said true community support transcends care facilities and requires promoting understanding of dementia in schools, and training pharmacists to spot early cognitive changes during medication consultations. It also extends to empowering dance groups for the elderly to become peer support networks.

"When a society stops viewing care as a private burden, parks become therapy spaces and checkout clerks become front-line observers," she said.

As the Beijing sunset gilds Baizhifang's "memory garden" where patients tend plants labeled with therapeutic mnemonics, Qian shares her newfound mantra.

"Growing old is not about fearing lost memories. It is about planting new ones, day by day," she said.

"Sometimes, it's the ache of being treated as a problem to manage."

Such methods, however, often clash with families' expectations. When Guan's daughter first refused a feeding tube — a common but contentious decision in end-of-life care — Jin's team proposed incremental steps: propping the elderly woman upright, offering honey-dipped spoons to stimulate salivation, and eventually reintroducing soft foods during music sessions. The process took six months.

"Families equate medical aggression with devotion," Jin said. "We teach them that not doing certain things can be an act of love."

China's elder-care workforce remains understaffed and undertrained, while cultural stigma still paints nursing homes as dumping grounds for "unfilial" families. Jin envisions a national network linking hospitals, community centers, and private facilities through shared training protocols.

Yet for all her large ambitions, Jin's greatest advocacy is for improving a patient's quality of life. "This isn't about adding years to life. It's about adding life to years," she said.

TOP NEWS

Flood havoc received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/03/2025 2:58:19 PM



An aerial photo shows flooding caused by heavy rains on Sunday in Campana, the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Thousands of residents have been evacuated after floodwaters inundated the vital agricultural hub of the country. MARTIN COSSARINI / REUTERS

Chinese drones a 'sharp' weapon in terror fight

The Caihong combat UAVs played a crucial role in counterterrorism operations abroad

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics, one of the country's top makers of unmanned military aircraft, has sold more than 200 midsize and large combat drones to over 10 nations, greatly facilitating wars against terrorists, according to a senior manager.

Wang Zhaokui, one of the Beijing-based academy's executives in charge of unmanned aircraft business, told China Daily in an exclusive interview that since the first delivery to a foreign customer in 2003, the Caihong, or Rainbow, combat drones have been widely deployed across Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and have played a crucial role in counterterrorism operations.

The pilotless planes have accumulated nearly 70,000 hours in combat actions from nearly 12,000 sorties, and have fired more than 2,000 munitions, boasting a 98.2-percent successful hit rate, he said.

"The Caihong-series planes have been called 'sharp weapons for counterterrorism operations' by our foreign clients. Our drones have earned China about \$2 billion," Wang noted.

The most popular model in the Caihong family is the CH-4, the executive said, noting that more than 100 CH-4s have been delivered to foreign military users, and that means the model is China's bestselling unmanned combat aircraft on the international market.

"One of our customers in the Middle East bought a large number of CH-4s and used them in battles with armed terrorists. The commander of that nation's army aviation force has spoken highly of our products. He told us that the CH-4 model, which is over 30 percent cheaper than Western-made drones of the same type, has very good capabilities that have been proven through combat operations.

"The commander said he was very much satisfied with the CH-4's outstanding performance and our support staff's excellent service, which met their defense needs and ensured their victory," Wang recalled.

"Before placing their order for the CH-4, the military procurement authorities of that country had carried out comprehensive market research by analyzing and comparing products from the United States, Europe, Israel and Russia. And in the end, they chose ours because the CH-4 is the 'best buy' and has the best cost performance."

He pointed out that one of the CH-4s deployed in another Middle East nation flew more than 3,000 hours in its service life and completed a long list of strike tasks, which testified to the model's quality and durability.

Wang's academy is a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, a leading space and defense contractor in the country.

The academy started researching and developing the CH drones in 1999 after its engineers realized that their expertise in aerodynamics and missile design could also be used on unmanned aircraft.

Since then, the research complex has established a portfolio of military drones, ranging from small models for battlefield reconnaissance to a big stealth version capable of penetrating

an enemy's air defense network.

"Our drones feature low operational and maintenance costs and better performance compared with similar types from the West. They have combat-tested capabilities. They are easy to use and convenient to maintain. Moreover, we always follow a set of customer-centered culture and strategies," Wang said.

In the past two years, the academy continued to deliver drones to foreign buyers according to schedules set by contracts, he said.

"Most of the orders in the past two years were placed by repeat customers. As a matter of fact, most of our buyers would return to us to place more orders after using our drones in combat and seeing how reliable our products are, and one of them has even purchased our drones four times," Wang noted.

The executive said his academy has been striving to promote its latest offer, the CH-9 heavy-duty strike drone, among current and potential buyers.

"The CH-9 is as good as the US' MQ-9 Reaper. We are convinced that the new model will attract our current and potential clients that are in need of such hardware and, at the same time, can afford it," he said.

The drone has a maximum takeoff weight of 5 metric tons. It has eight external weapon pylons under its wings as well as another one under the fuselage, and is able to carry a total of 490 kilograms of ammunition, including air-to-air and anti-ship missiles, bombs, torpedoes and loitering munitions.

When loaded with weapons, a CH-9 is able to fly as far as 11,500 kilometers and remain in the air for up to 40 hours. It can also generate battlefield intelligence in real time, autonomously identify targets and adjust its flight route.

"Of course, beside the high-end CH-9, we also have some low-cost types to offer to those with less budget," Wang said.

Thanks to their outstanding operational records and battle performance, the Caihong-series drones have become even more popular in the international market and continue to attract new buyers, the executive said.

"I am now in talks with several potential customers in the Middle East on three export projects," he said.

In addition to combat drones and their missiles, the academy has also delivered final assembly lines to two foreign countries, and the facilities "are still running," Wang said, noting that his academy is the first Chinese company to export assembly lines of military drones.

Furthermore, several foreign customers have reached the China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics, inquiring about its drones' applications for civilian purposes such as cargo transport, cloud seeding and natural resources prospecting, according to Wang.

"Our drones have helped our clients a lot in cracking down on terrorism and maintaining their domestic stability and security. They have also extensively improved the users' national defense capabilities. Through the drone transactions, China and those countries have consolidated their relationship and friendship," the executive said.

China's green system wins international approval

By ZHENG XIN
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China's energy market is becoming more accessible to green businesses worldwide, now that a key global renewable energy initiative has given its full backing to the nation's green electricity certificates, authorities said.

The National Energy Administration is pushing for wider use of the certificates to boost green power consumption, following the recent unconditional recognition given to the GEC system by RE100, a global campaign involving more than 400 member businesses that have committed to eventually using 100 percent renewable electricity in their operations.

Wan Jinsong, deputy head of the NEA, said that RE100's unconditional acceptance of the GECs is a "landmark achievement" that signals the international standing of the system.

The move confirms that China's renewable electricity market has made a crucial step forward in providing confidence to companies that use the GEC system, as they can make credible claims about using green power, knowing that their renewable energy purchases have a verifiable impact, according to the RE100 website.

It also said that China has become

an attractive international market for companies' drive toward 100 percent renewable electricity, as proving their use of renewables in the country is now easier.

Furthermore, the GEC system ensures that renewable energy use by large manufacturers in China is recognized throughout global supply chains, it said.

Currently, 270 RE100 member companies purchase green electricity in China, according to Helen Clarkson, CEO of the Climate Group, which co-launched RE100.

They reported an annual green electricity volume of 77 billion kilowatt-hours, accounting for 59 percent of their electricity consumption. Among these, the manufacturing sector consumed the most green electricity, reaching 63.876 billion kWh, said Clarkson.

She added that RE100's unconditional approval shows the influence of China's GECs on the international stage. The system helps RE100 members and their suppliers meet renewable energy commitments, offering them more flexible ways to do so.

This recognition followed successful discussions between RE100 and the China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute based on the mutual consensus on improvements to China's GEC

system that were led by the Chinese government.

RE100 was launched in 2014 by the Climate Group and Carbon Disclosure Project. Member companies commit to using 100 percent renewable electricity by no later than 2050. Its technical guidelines influence how global companies and their supply chains buy renewable electricity.

Yi Yuechun, deputy head of the China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute, said the GEC system helps assess provincial-level renewable energy targets and the use of green power by industries such as aluminum production. It also supports carbon accounting and carbon footprint calculations, he said.

Manufacturing sectors such as telecommunications and automotive account for 70 percent of green electricity certificate purchases, he added.

The GECs are the sole proof of the environmental attributes of renewable energy in China and serve as the only certificate for verifying renewable energy production and consumption. One certificate is generated for every 1,000 kWh of green electricity.

China started its GEC system in 2017. Previously, China's green certificates were only conditionally accepted by RE100, requiring extra proof. China improved the system

by expanding the GECs to cover all renewable power projects in 2023 and making it the sole proof of renewable energy attributes.

German chemical giant BASF was one of the first foreign companies to buy green power in China. BASF has been investing in new energy projects while also buying green electricity in China through power trading and the GECs to reduce its carbon emissions, it said.

Pan Huimin, deputy head of the NEA's new and renewable energy department, said the RE100 recognition will significantly increase the willingness and enthusiasm of RE100 member companies and their supply chains to purchase green electricity and use China's certificates. This is expected to further expand the demand for the GECs, he said.

Pan said that the NEA will continue to work with relevant departments to strengthen communication and exchanges with RE100. It will encourage RE100 to issue technical guidelines related to purchasing the GECs, which would better assist Chinese companies in buying them.

The NEA will also enhance communication on the GEC system with China's major trading partners to accelerate the process of achieving international mutual recognition.

Plan: People's wisdom in process of formulation

From page 1

Xi also said it is important to coordinate development and security and comprehensively take into account internal and external risks and challenges.

Anthony Moretti, an associate professor at the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership of Robert Morris University in the US, said that as China is poised to embark on its 15th Five-Year Plan, it should do so with confidence.

"We can anticipate that China will maintain its commitment to long-term thinking, ensuring, among other things, that high-quality development is fundamental to all decisions," Moretti said in an article published in the Global Times. "In effect, goals are set. Overarching everything is the requirement that the overall well-being of the Chinese people is central to every action."

The process of formulating five-year plans is a vivid embodiment of the practice of China's socialist democracy, as the documents are a result of pooling people's wisdom based on extensive consultations before policy decisions are made, analysts said.

Partnership: Data centers, smart cities help to integrate digital, real economies

From page 1

During the 2020-23 period, a record 121 infrastructure projects worth about \$46 billion were executed, accounting for 45.15 percent of the total projects, 40.75 percent of the total amount, and 28.57 percent of the total jobs created. The transportation sector, including ports, airports, roads and transportation support services, has been growing steadily. In 2020-23, the sector contributed 63.24 percent of the amount and 80.28 percent of the jobs created by China's infrastructure projects in the LAC states.

Many of the recent projects have been carried out under the Belt and Road Initiative framework, which currently covers more than 20 LAC countries. Proposed by President Xi in 2013, the BRI is the largest socio-economic development plan that a country has put forward, and is aimed at improving infrastructure connectivity across economies and, by default, further stimulating the flow of trade, and boosting people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

The initiative's ultimate goal is to help improve people's livelihoods and quality of life by building a community with a shared future for mankind. The initiative

The BRI advocates a world order based on multilateralism, where all countries, big or small, are treated equally. It believes in the principles of equality, mutual respect and noninterference in other countries' internal affairs.

advocates a world order based on multilateralism, where all countries, big or small, developed or developing, are treated equally. The initiative believes in the principles of equality, mutual respect and noninterference in other countries' internal affairs.

A key project Chinese companies have completed in Latin America is the port of Chanca in Peru, which, from its inauguration on Nov 14, 2024, to the end of January this year, had transported more than 15,866 containers, handling 112,000 metric tons of bulk cargo and over 2,100 vehicles. The exports from the port mainly com-

prise agricultural products, including blueberries, avocados and corn, with the shipments reaching China in just 23 days.

China and the LAC states have been implementing their projects based on agreements of economic and technological collaboration, using commercial loans, capital financing and/or development financing, and leveraging multilateral financing sources, such as a special credit line for China-Latin America infrastructure development, the China-Latin America cooperation fund, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the New Development Bank.

Despite the remarkable success of Chinese infrastructure projects in the LAC states, however, the two sides need to further strengthen data centers and build more smart cities, as well as expeditiously implement the digitalization plan in the LAC countries, in order to integrate the digital and the real economies, and realize sustainable development.

The author is a professor at Changzhou University and deputy director of the Latin American Studies Center of the university. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Visitors take photos of the CH-9 unmanned aerial vehicle displayed at the 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, also known as Airshow China, on Nov 13, 2024, in the port city of Zhuhai, South China's Guangdong province. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

CHINA

Ex-political adviser gets suspended death penalty

By CAO YIN
caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Han Yong, a former senior national political adviser, was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve on Monday for accepting bribes, a court in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region announced.

Han was also deprived of his political rights for life and had all his personal assets confiscated, according to the ruling by the Nanning Intermediate People's Court. The court ordered that his illicit gains and profit earned from them be turned over to the national treasury.

An investigation found that Han used his positions and influence in the provinces of Jilin and Shaanxi, as well as the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to seek benefits for other departments and individuals between 1993 and 2023. The court said he accepted bribes totaling more than 261 million yuan (\$36.1 million) in exchange for helping others with business operations, project contracts and personnel arrangements.

The court said Han's conduct constituted the crime of bribery, with the amount involved being "extremely huge" and the damage caused to the interests of the country and people "extremely large". It said that his crimes warranted a death sentence.

However, the court said it decided to impose a suspended death sentence because Han confessed to the crime, showed remorse, failed to obtain some of the bribes, voluntarily disclosed some bribes that were previously unknown to investigators and voluntarily returned his illegal gains.

In China, a suspended death sentence is typically commuted to life in prison if the inmate commits no further offenses during the two-year reprieve. That sentence can be further reduced based on good behavior.

Han, 68, is a native of Jilin province. Public records show he began his career in 1974 and joined the Communist Party of China in 1976. After earning a law degree, he went on to hold positions as a prosecutor and in disciplinary commissions in Jilin and Xinjiang.

In early 2016, he became chairman of the Shaanxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. From March 2022 to March 2023, he served as deputy head of the Committee on Population, Resources and Environment of the CPPCC National Committee, China's top political advisory body.

He was placed under investigation in October 2023 and expelled from the Party in April last year. He was prosecuted for suspected bribery in August, and his case was publicly heard in the Nanning court in December.

China-US research unveils dinosaur-bird transition

By LI MENGHAN
limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

Researchers from China and the United States have shed new light on the ancient evolutionary transition from dinosaurs to birds, thanks to a remarkably well-preserved specimen of Archaeopteryx.

The study, jointly led by Hu Han of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Jingmai O'Connor of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, was published this month in the journal Nature.

Archaeopteryx, widely recognized as the most primitive known bird from the Late Jurassic period around 150 million years ago, is considered a pivotal species in paleontology for displaying features of both birds and non-avian dinosaurs.

Like all 13 previously known Archaeopteryx fossils, the newly reported one was found in limestone deposits near Solnhofen, Germany. The pigeon-sized specimen, collected by the Field Museum in 2022, is the smallest and best-preserved discovered so far.

"The specimen in Chicago is

exceptionally intact, with only a single digit missing," Hu said.

"This has laid a solid foundation for the first successful complete 3D reconstruction of this bird, especially of the skull, a feat that previous studies failed to achieve due to factors such as specimen preservation and technological limitations," she said. "This breakthrough has unveiled previously unknown anatomical features and provided a crucial 3D model for future studies."

Hu said the success of this study stemmed from close collaboration within the China-US research team. O'Connor previously worked in China for nearly a decade, helping foster cross-border scientific ties.

Using high-resolution CT scans and 3D reconstruction, the study revealed an almost entirely intact skull, including the palatal region. The researchers found it to be intermediate between that of Archaeopteryx and modern birds, contrasting with previous inferences about the habits of this creature," Hu said.

"This represents a critical evolutionary stage in the transition from the rigid, immobile skulls of non-avian theropods to the lighter, more kinetic skulls of birds," Hu said.



A simulated image of the Chicago Archaeopteryx.
MICHAEL ROTHMAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The study also identified preserved soft tissues, including toe pads shaped similarly to those of modern ground-foraging birds, suggesting Archaeopteryx was adapted for walking.

"This indicates that it may have had a mixed lifestyle — spending some of the time in trees and some on the ground — contrasting with previous inferences about the habits of this creature," Hu said.

In addition, the study provided key insights into the wing structure of Archaeopteryx and its relevance to the origin of bird flight.

"For the first time, we discovered tertials in Archaeopteryx," Hu said.



A medical expert from Beijing Anzhen Hospital conducts a free checkup for a girl during a health awareness event in Barkam, Sichuan province, on Sunday. The event, spanning regions in Sichuan and neighboring Gansu province, offers free medical checkups and treatments to local residents. It commenced in Barkam on Friday and will continue until Wednesday, with the participation of over 600 medical volunteers from Beijing. CUI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Pandas return to Sichuan after their 11-year stint in Malaysia

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

After spending 11 years in Malaysia, giant panda pair Fu Wa and Feng Yi were returned to the Ya'an base of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province on Sunday evening, the center said.

Known as Xing Xing and Liang Liang in Malaysia, the pandas were accompanied on the journey by Malaysian keepers and an experienced veterinarian from the panda center. The veterinarian had traveled to Malaysia in advance to conduct routine health checks and assessments with local veterinary experts.

The pandas will undergo quarantine at the center's Ya'an base for at least one month.

Known as Fu Wa and Feng Yi in China, they were both born on Aug 23, 2006, at the panda center. They were sent to Zoo Negara Malaysia in 2014 as part of a 10-year giant panda international cooperation program that coincided with the

40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Malaysia.

Under an agreement signed between China and Malaysia last year, the cooperation period, which had been set to end on May 20, 2024, was extended by one year.

As the first pair of giant pandas to live in Malaysia, Fu Wa and Feng Yi became well-known animal celebrities and helped foster people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, the center said.

Over the years, the center and Zoo Negara Malaysia engaged in in-depth cooperation on giant panda conservation and breeding, disease prevention and control, public education and employee exchanges.

During their time in Malaysia, the panda pair gave birth to three cubs — Nuan Nuan, Yi Yi and Sheng Yi. By August 2023, all three cubs had been sent to China and are currently in good health, according to the center.

In preparation for the return of Fu Wa and Feng Yi, the Ya'an base

made comprehensive arrangements, including organizing quarantine facilities, deploying workers, stocking food and setting up a health monitoring system, to ensure a smooth transition and quick adaptation to their new environment.

The center said Fu Wa and Feng Yi will meet the public at an appropriate time. Until then, updates on their daily lives will be shared through the center's official platforms.

China and Malaysia are expected to launch a new round of giant panda conservation cooperation within this year, according to the center.

From the 1990s through the end of last year, China conducted panda conservation cooperation programs with 26 institutions in 20 countries, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Most pandas returning from overseas reside either at the Ya'an base or the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding.

New microbe found aboard Tiangong

First-of-its-kind discovery expected to contribute to future space expeditions

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's Tiangong space station has enabled researchers to achieve a series of scientific and technological breakthroughs since its completion two and a half years ago. In the latest development, Chinese scientists have identified a new bacterial strain aboard the orbital outpost.

The novel microbe, officially named *Niallia tiangongensis*, was collected by astronauts inside the space station in May 2023 during the Shenzhou XV mission, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

Astronauts used sterile wipes to gather samples from interior surfaces and placed them in low-temperature storage before returning them to Earth for genomic and metabolic analysis.

Following high-resolution imaging, whole-genome sequencing and phylogenetic comparison, researchers determined the strain belongs to the genus *Niallia* within the family *Cytobacillaceae*, but is genetically distinct from its closest relatives on Earth.

The strain demonstrates a notable ability to survive the extreme environment aboard Tiangong and appears more effective at repairing damage from space radiation than similar bacteria found on Earth.

It marks the first time Chinese researchers have discovered a new species inside Tiangong. Their findings were published in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Systematic and Evolu-

tionary Microbiology. "Understanding the characteristics of microbes during long-term space missions is essential for safeguarding the health of astronauts and maintaining the functionality of spacecraft," the authors wrote. The research is part of the China Space Station Habitation Area Microbiome Program.

The discovery is expected to support improvements in microbial control strategies for future spaceflights, contributing to a safer environment for astronauts and longer-lasting spacecraft. It may also have applications in agriculture, industry and medicine, the agency said.

Thanks to Tiangong, Chinese scientists have already reported multiple world-class achievements, including the development of the first germplasm resources of rice and ratoon rice in space; the first human embryonic stem cells differentiated into hematopoietic stem and precursor cells in orbit; the world's first cold atom interference gyroscope in space microgravity; the first high-throughput in-orbit microbial control test platform; and the longest operation of a space-based water ecosystem.

As of Dec 1, a total of 181 science and technology projects had been conducted aboard Tiangong, with nearly 2 metric tons of mission necessities delivered to the Tiangong, and nearly 100 types of experimental samples and 300 trillion bytes of data returned to Earth, according to a white paper released by the agency in December.



The intelligent marine research vessel *Tong Ji* completes its eight-day trial voyage on Thursday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tong Ji ship completes 8-day trial voyage, tests

By XU NUO
xunuo@chinadaily.com.cn

China's first intelligent marine research vessel, the *Tong Ji*, has successfully completed an eight-day trial voyage, Shanghai-based Tongji University said on Thursday.

During the trial, the ship underwent more than 100 tests, including its overall performance, underwater radiation and noise levels, intelligent navigation and remote-control systems. All results met required standards, and the ship's handling, top speed and onboard living conditions exceeded expectations, the university said.

Measuring 82 meters in length and 15 meters in width, the *Tong Ji* has a displacement of about 2,800 metric tons, a top speed of 16 knots and a cruising range of up to 8,000 nautical miles. It is capable of navigating all regions except ice-covered areas, and can operate in any weather conditions, day or night.

Equipped with cutting-edge smart systems, the vessel features shore-based remote control, autonomous navigation in open waters and intelligent energy efficiency management integrated into a single platform.

It is also designed to carry remotely operated underwater vehicles and multiple container laboratories, enabling a wide range of scientific research and cross-disciplinary operations.

"The ship enables comprehen-

sive research and surveys in marine geology, marine chemistry, marine biology, physical oceanography and marine engineering geology," said Shi Zhenming, vice-president of Tongji University, as quoted by Shanghai Observer.

The vessel's hybrid power system reduces energy consumption by about 8 percent compared to similar ships. Its intelligent energy management and smart route planning also help cut operational costs by roughly 3 to 5 percent.

Optimized for onboard efficiency, the *Tong Ji* offers a 460-square-meter deck operation area, 320 square meters of laboratory space, an average of 10.2 square meters of living space per crew member, and more than 100 square meters dedicated to meetings, leisure and fitness. These specifications match the operational capacity of a 3,000-ton research vessel, according to Tuo Shouting, vice-dean of the School of Ocean and Earth Science at Tongji University.

The *Tong Ji* highlights China's progress in developing modern research and training vessels. From 2010 to last year, China built more than 30 oceanographic research ships, including the *Xuelong 2*, the world's first polar research icebreaker with bidirectional icebreaking capabilities, and the *Sun Yat-sen University* vessel, the country's largest oceanographic research and training ship, according to China Central Television.

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Huawei's own OS powers newest PCs

Executive: Every line of code you write rewriting history of China software biz

By MA SI
 masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Huawei Technologies Co officially unveiled its personal computers powered by its self-developed operating system on Monday in Chengdu, Sichuan province, challenging Microsoft's Windows and Apple's macOS in the desk operating system sector.

For decades, the global PC operating system market has been dominated by Microsoft's Windows and Apple's macOS, while domestic alternatives have largely relied on Linux-based modifications. Huawei wants to break this paradigm by developing its own PC operating system — HarmonyOS.

Huawei Executive Director Yu Chengdong said the company remains committed to forging the "difficult yet right path" by advancing its self-developed HarmonyOS.

"Every line of code you write is rewriting the history of China's software industry," Yu said, adding that HarmonyOS integrates hardware, software, chips and cloud capabilities to deliver breakthroughs in AI-powered features and cross-device collaboration.

He highlighted HarmonyOS PC's ecosystem progress, saying it supports core application scenarios for productivity tools, financial management, design and creation, entertainment, education and gaming.

More than 150 PC apps are being adapted to HarmonyOS PCs, with more than 1,000 converged ecosystem apps already adapted, Yu said.

The new PCs run on HarmonyOS 5, which brings AI capabilities directly to the device level, reducing reliance on cloud connectivity.

Its "develop once, deploy everywhere" framework slashes development costs and time, addressing long-standing challenges for domestic software adapting to Windows' complex ecosystem, Huawei said.

The company said HarmonyOS for PCs leverages over 2,700 core patents and five years of research and development efforts, involving more than 10,000 top engineers and 20 research institutes.

And there are 7.2 million app developers for its HarmonyOS ecosystem, Huawei said.

Chinese partners like Feishu showcased optimized apps at the conference, highlighting seamless cross-device functionality. Social platforms like RedNote and Bilibili have also migrated to HarmonyOS PC, merging mobile convenience with desktop productivity.

HarmonyOS was first unveiled as an Android alternative in August 2019, three months after the US government added Huawei to its Entity List, restricting the Chinese company's access to crucial US technologies.

Since then, Huawei has been working hard to push for wider adoption of HarmonyOS in cars, smartwatches, home appliances and other internet of things devices.

HarmonyOS surpassed Apple's iOS to become the second-best-selling mobile operating system in China in the first quarter of 2024, according to market research firm Counterpoint.

The debut of HarmonyOS on PCs shows that all of Huawei's devices can be powered by its in-house operating system, said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association.

Han Juke, deputy head of the China Communications Industry Association, said this marks a breakthrough in China's software industry.

Future success requires strong ecosystem support and good market strategies. The next few years will be a critical period to test whether HarmonyOS can grow into a world-class operating system, experts added.



An electric and combustion dual-power train manufactured in China awaits departure at Central Station in Santiago, Chile. XINHUA

China-LatAm trade set to skyrocket

By ZHONG NAN
 zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The steady advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, coupled with a growing network of bilateral free trade agreements, will unlock fresh potential for trade and investment ties between China and Latin America in the years ahead, said market watchers and exporters on Monday.

As infrastructure connectivity improves under the BRI through enhanced port facilities, logistics networks and digital trade corridors, they said regional integration is advancing, reducing transportation costs and expanding access to global markets.

Although several countries are facing challenges posed by protectionism and unilateralism, high-standard free trade agreements, such as the China-Chile FTA, China-Ecuador FTA and China-Costa Rica FTA, will serve as benchmarks for future economic partnerships, promoting rules-based trade, intellectual property protection and sustainable development practices, said Wang Qian, a researcher specializing in international trade at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics.

As China continues to expand its high-standard opening-up, and Latin American countries pursue diversification strategies, the evolving bilateral framework will not only deepen economic interdependence but also foster inclusive growth and shared prosperity

across both sides, said Wang.

China is currently negotiating upgrades to the China-Peru FTA and discussing new FTAs with Panama and Honduras. Additionally, the nation has conducted a feasibility study on a China-Colombia FTA, aiming to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation, according to information released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Sun Yanfeng, a researcher specializing in Latin American studies at the Beijing-based China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that the complementary nature of the two sides' economies further amplifies the potential for deeper cooperation.

Latin America's abundant natural resources and agricultural output align seamlessly with China's manufacturing prowess and vast consumer market, creating robust trade synergies, said Sun.

"Chinese companies, such as BYD, China General Nuclear Power Corp and China COSCO Shipping Corp, are also increasingly investing in sectors such as renewable energy, manufacturing, transportation, mining and agribusiness across Latin America, bringing capital, technology and know-how to local economies," he added.

China's direct investment flow to Latin America totaled \$14.71 billion in 2024. During the first quarter of 2025, Chinese investment in the region reached \$270 million. As of March 2025, Latin American countries had established a total of 37,000 businesses in China, data

from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

China-Latin America trade volume reached a record high of \$518.47 billion in 2024, up 6 percent year-on-year. Their total trade value stood at \$162.21 billion between January and April, said the General Administration of Customs.

Changzhou Samkit Electric Co Ltd, a Changzhou, Jiangsu province-based home appliance manufacturer, shipped 1.15 million yuan (\$159,420) worth of smart vacuum cleaners to Brazil earlier this month and will participate in more trade shows in Latin America in the second half of this year, according to Nanjing Customs.

"Shifting our focus from a single market — primarily the United States — to emerging markets like Brazil will be our most important transformation this year," said Qiu Rijun, the company's general manager.

Chaoyang Jinda Molybdenum Co Ltd, a ferromolybdenum and molybdenum oxide manufacturer based in Chaoyang, Liaoning province, saw its exports soar 19 percent on a yearly basis to 260 million yuan in the first four months, with Latin American economies serving as the primary destinations, according to Shenyang Customs.

"Driven by rapid urbanization and industrialization, Latin American countries such as Peru and Chile have seen a sharp rise in demand for our products in recent years," said Li Jinling, vice-president of the company.

Beijing pins focus on digital future

By LIU YUKUN
 liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing has deployed nearly 16,000 5G-Advanced (5G-A) base stations and leads Chinese cities in 5G base station density per 10,000 people, municipal authorities said recently.

Beijing will further expand opening-up in the telecom sector, said Lu Jianwen, director of the Beijing Communications Administration.

Six foreign-funded companies, including Cummins' China branch, have secured approval for the second batch of pilot operations in value-added telecom services such as internet service providers. To date, 10 foreign firms in Beijing have obtained such permits.

"Beijing is among the first four pilot cities in China to open value-added telecom services to foreign investment, leading the nation in both the number of approved foreign enterprises and the variety of permitted services," Lu noted.

He pledged to accelerate upgrades in networks such as 5G, gigabit optical networks and computing power infrastructure to bolster new quality productive forces.

Lu's remarks were made at Beijing's 2025 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day event. At the event, telecom operators vowed to advance new digital infrastructure and high-quality digital economic growth to empower the real economy's digital transformation.

For instance, China Mobile's Beijing branch is upgrading computing-network infrastructure. China Unicom's Beijing branch is advancing 5G/5G-A networks and 10-gigabit optical network pilot communities. China Telecom's Beijing branch is accelerating the implementation of digital innovation technologies. China Tower's Beijing branch has built extensive 5G base stations to drive efficient network establishment.

Li Qiang, general manager of China Mobile's Beijing branch, said that intelligence-driven digital innovation is critical to Beijing's socio-economic development.

The company will enhance computing power network infrastructure, data ecosystems and AI applications to fuel growth of the city's new quality productive forces.

Liu Junwei, China Mobile's chief expert, highlighted AI, data, and computing power as core drivers of new quality productive forces but noted challenges like high computing costs, reliance on foreign tech and incomplete commercial models.

Chen Haibo, general manager of China Unicom's Beijing unit, pledged stronger computing and data infrastructure, along with expanded computing power's innovation and supply. He said the company will ramp up technological innovation and investment of resources in cloud computing.

Kou Fengda, general manager of China Telecom's Beijing branch, emphasized large-scale management system of intelligence-driven computing resources and cloud-network-computing power integration to support Beijing's digital economy.

Wang Yu, a professor of Tsinghua University, called for optimizing large AI model training through hardware-software synergy.

"Current hardware upgrades offer limited gains, but software optimization holds vast potential to improve cost-performance ratios," Wang said. He emphasized that the application of large AI models must address cost-performance challenges.

Joy of reading



Employees from the Chawu Engineering Division of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd check out books and magazines during a recent Book Day event it launched, aiming to inject new cultural vitality into the division and promote the joy and educational benefits that reading can provide. YU XIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Railway freight volume up 3.6% in Jan-April

China's national railways transported about 1.3 billion metric tons of goods in the first four months of 2025, up 3.6 percent year-on-year, according to data released on Monday by the national railway operator. Daily loading volume averaged 180,000 carriages, rising 4.7 percent, said China State Railway Group Co Ltd. National railways moved 672 million tons of coal

from January to April, including 464 million tons for power generation.

Chinese mainland shares close mixed

Chinese stocks closed mixed on Monday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index flat at 3,367.58 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.08 percent lower at 10,171.09 points.

Rosy outlook for investments in nation

By CHAI HUA
 grace@chinadailyhk.com

Investing in China provides greater certainty and long-term growth potential, Li Ming, vice-chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, said on Monday at the 2025 Global Investor Conference in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province.

"At a time when stability has become a scarce resource globally, China's resilient economy and robust A-share market will provide global investors with irreplaceable opportunities," Li noted.

The two-day event, hosted by the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, gathered nearly 400 participants, including representatives from financial regulators, global exchanges, investment institutions and listed companies.

Data show that long-term institutional investors, including social security funds, insurance companies and pension funds, have not purchased over 200 billion yuan (\$27.73 billion) worth of A-shares this year, reflecting a virtuous cycle between accelerating medium, long-term capital inflows and the market's steady growth, he said.

"Listed companies are the source of value for investing in China," Li

noted. Despite multiple challenges, A-share listed companies have demonstrated remarkable resilience, with three-quarters remaining profitable and half maintaining profit growth.

Looking ahead, Li said the authorities will optimize overseas listing procedures, refine the qualified foreign institutional investor system, and support eligible foreign institutions in applying for new business licenses and launching new products.

Morgan Stanley Chief China Economist Robin Xing said the global economic landscape is witnessing a remarkable divergence, with China demonstrating growing stability while Western markets face mounting uncertainties.

In his keynote address, he characterized the phenomenon as "stability in the East, turbulence in the West."

Xing observed that the US globalization model, which has been working effectively over the last three decades, is undergoing fundamental transformation recently with trade protectionism and emerging economic isolationism. "The shifts present a pivotal window for strategic repositioning for China and other major economies."

The economist applauded China's proactive response. Since last

September, policymakers have rolled out a comprehensive package of measures to stabilize financial markets and engineer a consumption-led transformation, laying solid groundwork for China to strengthen its economic resilience and market appeal during this period of global realignment, he noted.

"The center of global economic activity is moving very rapidly to this region (China and Asia), and it soon will be well over half of the global economy," said Ian Goldin, former vice-president of the World Bank and professor of globalization and development at the University of Oxford.

Goldin highlighted that Asia's advantage goes beyond scale. "It's not only size that matters — it's innovation ... The focus is on research and development, technology and new quality productive forces to create technologies that improve the quality of human life, and also the quality of the environment," he explained.

The professor's first-hand account of Shenzhen's transformation served as a powerful illustration of Asia's economic rise. He first visited Shenzhen in 1984, when it was "a small village," in the professor's words, and this time he was very impressed by the "remarkable" changes and growth.

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BUSINESS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/03/2025 3:58:19 PM Major milestone Xiaomi to unveil 3nm chip for smartphones

XRing O1 result of \$1.9b investment by tech major seeking semiconductor edge

By MASI
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Xiaomi Corp said on Monday that it will unveil its 3-nanometer XRing O1 chip for smartphones on Thursday, marking the company's revived ambitions to bolster its semiconductor prowess.

The new chip, a result of over four years of intensive research and development efforts, will position Xiaomi to compete directly with leading global chip designers, but it remains to be seen how the actual products will perform on handsets, experts said.

Lei Jun, CEO and chairman of Xiaomi, said via a post on Sina Weibo that the company's cumulative investment in the XRing O1 chips had exceeded 13.5 billion yuan (\$1.9 billion) by the end of April.

The investment is part of Xiaomi's broader ambition to invest 50 billion yuan into chip R&D from 2021 to 2031.

Xiaomi now has a 2,500-strong semiconductor R&D team driving innovation, enforcing its position among China's top three chip design firms in both R&D spending and team scale, Lei said.

The company's top executive also

emphasized the significance of the achievement.

"Reaching this milestone demanded unwavering commitment, courage and substantial technical and financial resources. The XRing O1 marks just the beginning of our journey to redefine high-end semiconductor capabilities in the global market."

XRing O1 is Xiaomi's dramatic comeback in the high-stakes arena of advanced chip design after an 11-year journey marred by setbacks and reinvention. In 2014, Xiaomi launched its inaugural semiconductor project — code-named Surge — targeting mid-to-high-end mobile chips, Lei recalled.

In 2017, Xiaomi debuted its Surge S1 System-on-Chip (SoC) for smartphones, but commercial challenges forced a strategic retreat from large-scale chip development. After the setback, Xiaomi shifted focus to "small chips", releasing over a dozen specialized semiconductors for fast charging, imaging, battery management and 5G connectivity, while quietly honing R&D expertise.

Concurrent with its electric vehicle venture, Xiaomi secretly greenlit the XRing project in 2021 to reboot flagship SoC development, vowing

to conquer cutting-edge process nodes.

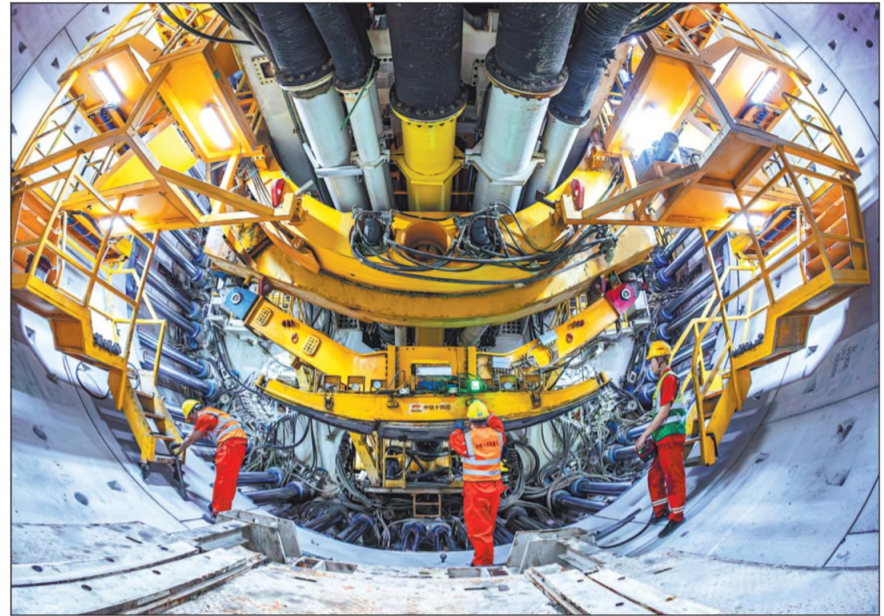
"We aim to develop chips with the most advanced chip manufacturing prowess, and first-tier performance and efficiency, aligning with Xiaomi's premium device strategy," Lei added.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association, said Xiaomi's attempts to make inroads into the competitive chip industry highlight its determination to differentiate its products from a crowd of rivals and to seek growth via innovation.

In the first quarter, Xiaomi was the third-largest smartphone vendor worldwide, only behind Samsung and Apple, in terms of smartphone shipments, according to market research firm TechInsights.

Xiaomi accounted for 14.1 percent of the global smartphone market, with about 42 million smartphones shipped out of factories to retailers worldwide from January to March, marking a 2.7 percent year-on-year growth, TechInsights said.

Xiaomi is one of a growing number of Chinese companies that are devoting a large amount of resources to the semiconductor sector, as they increasingly realize the importance of chips in driving innovation, experts added.



Employees work at the construction site of a tunneling project for the Tianjin-Weifang High-speed Railway on Sunday. China Railway 14th Bureau Group Corp Ltd, a unit of State-owned China Railway Construction Corp, said its workers completed tunnelling 5 kilometers beneath the Haihe River, a major milestone in building the 348.9-km railway that aims to support the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Skechers laces up for growth in China

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Riding on China's push to revive consumer spending and tap its vast domestic market, the United States-based athleisure company Skechers plans to increase investments, fortify local supply chains and double down on innovation to seize more market share in the country.

China has placed strong emphasis on consumption as a key driver of economic growth. In the Government Work Report delivered in March, the country outlined a series of measures to boost domestic demand, positioning the expansion of consumption as one of its top policy priorities for the year.

Willie Tan, CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia, said these efforts aim to stimulate household spending, improve the consumption environment and unlock the potential of China's huge consumer market.

"The trade tensions between China and the US have a profound impact on the global economic order," said Tan. "We firmly believe that the advantages of China-US cooperation significantly outweigh any disadvantages."

"In the wave of economic globalization, the world has transformed into a closely connected global village," he said, adding that China, as the world's second largest economy, boasts a substantial consumer market and a comprehensive industrial ecosystem, providing significant impetus for the growth

of multinational corporations.

Skechers, which entered the domestic market in 2007, has opened nearly 3,500 points of sale across the Chinese mainland and developed online sales operations on multiple e-commerce platforms.

Optimistic about the Chinese market, Skechers has invested over 60 million yuan (\$8.25 million) in recent years to establish an Asia-Pacific product innovation center, as well as an imaging studio and livestreaming facility in Dongguan, Guangdong province, aiming to better meet the needs of local consumers.

With a total investment exceeding 3 billion yuan, Skechers is building the second phase of its China logistics center project in Taicang, Jiangsu province. Upon completion, it will serve as a key hub for both its online and offline logistics operations in China.

In 2024, the US footwear and apparel company achieved a record-high global sales revenue of \$8.97 billion, with China standing out as its largest overseas market. As a key growth engine, the Chinese market plays a pivotal role in supporting the company's goal of reaching \$10 billion in global sales by 2026, according to its annual financial report and latest growth plan.

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening the supply chain in China, Tan highlighted the need for increased resource allocation to harness digital technologies, enhance supply chain efficiency and expand the local operations

team to ensure greater agility and responsiveness to the evolving Chinese market in the years ahead.

With a well-established local supply chain and strong product development capabilities, Tan noted that about 90 percent of the products sold by Skechers in China are "Made in China".

Looking ahead to the second half of 2025 and guided by macro policies focused on boosting consumption and expanding domestic demand, he said Skechers will intensify efforts to align with national strategic priorities and enhance the resilience of its local industrial chain, supporting China's efforts to stabilize foreign trade and foreign investment.

Despite recent US tariff hikes affecting economies around the world, many multinational corporations have reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Chinese market, said Lin Meng, director of the modern supply chain research institute at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Lin said that China's role in global supply chains remains indispensable, and that China-US collaboration can help mitigate the operational disruptions triggered by escalating trade tensions.

China's stable and business-friendly environment contributed to a modest rebound in foreign direct investment in March, with actual FDI inflows into the Chinese mainland rising 13.2 percent year-on-year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

Lenovo sees AI deliver on productivity

By MASI

Chinese tech company Lenovo has outlined a bold vision for AI-driven intelligent agents poised to redefine human-machine collaboration, while addressing concerns over global tariff pressures and product pricing.

Yang Yuanqing, chairman and CEO of Lenovo, said AI is evolving from a tool into a "cognitive operating system" for individuals and enterprises.

"In the future, AI will handle the grind of productivity, while humans focus on creativity," Yang said. Highlighting breakthroughs like Chinese open-source AI company DeepSeek's inference-optimized models, Yang predicted that intelligent agents will become the next catalyst for quality-of-life and productivity gains.

These AI agents need to excel in areas such as multi-modal interaction, namely, combining text, voice, gesture and eye-tracking for seamless cross-device intent recognition, he said.

Meanwhile, AI agents need to be good at cognitive decisionmaking, to integrate edge-to-cloud knowledge bases for adaptive reasoning and "transfer learning" capabilities.

Addressing data risks, Yang emphasized security as the foundation, citing Lenovo's deepfake detection tools now embedded in its agents. On the technical front, he stressed that edge AI's exponential growth relies on two pillars, namely customized computing solutions, developed with chip partners, and software-hardware co-optimized inference engines.

During a live demo, Lenovo's second-gen agent — boosted by its proprietary inference accelerator — solved a data analysis problem where the first-gen model failed, showcasing gains in speed, memory efficiency and energy use.

With US tariffs rattling electronics markets, Yang acknowledged pricing uncertainties, but struck a measured tone in an interview. "Semiconductor-based products currently enjoy tariff exemptions, so near-term impacts may be limited," he noted. However, he identified two critical variables, component supply-demand dynamics and policy shifts, which could reshape Lenovo's pricing strategy.

While avoiding direct commitments, Yang underscored Lenovo's globalized operations as a buffer: "As a company with R&D, manufacturing, and supply chains distributed worldwide, we're positioned to adapt."

Liu Jun, president of Lenovo China, said the company aims to accelerate AI adoption for over 30,000 government and enterprise clients, and empower over 1 million small and medium-sized enterprises to unlock new revenue streams, reduce costs and improve efficiency in 2025.

It is also working to deliver proactive, multi-device, and multi-scenario AI services to more than 230 million individual consumers across China this year, Liu added.

Lenovo reported a strong financial performance for the last quarter of 2024. Its revenue grew 20 percent year-on-year to \$18.8 billion, marking the third consecutive quarter of double-digit growth as its investment in AI drives businesses forward.

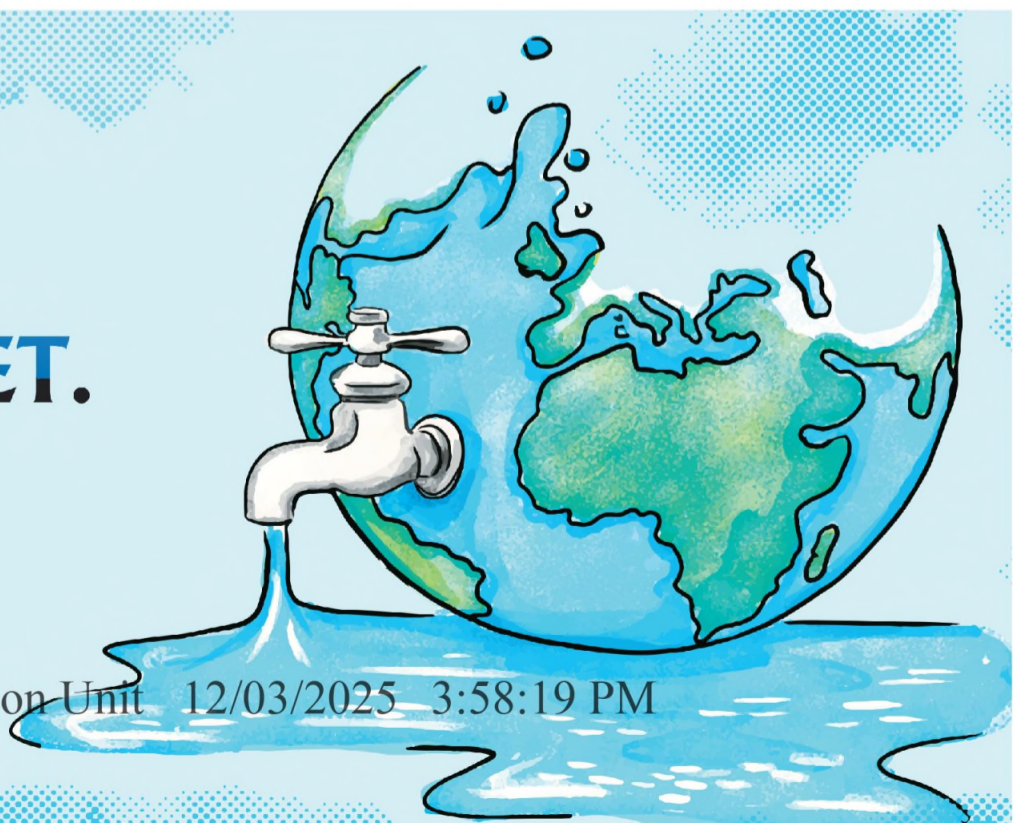
In February, Lenovo and Alat, a unit of the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund, broke ground on a new manufacturing base in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

Alat CEO Amit Midha said: "With the establishment of a regional headquarters in Riyadh and a world-class manufacturing hub, powered by clean energy, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we expect the Lenovo team to further their potential across the Middle East and Africa region."

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WORLD

Centrists gain ground in 3 EU countries

Parties see wins in Romania, Portugal, while Polish election enters 2nd round

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Sunday elections in three European Union member states — Romania, Poland and Portugal — show that centrist parties are favored by voters.

In Romania, Nicusor Dan, 55-year-old mayor of capital Bucharest since 2020, won by an 8 percentage point majority over his opponent George Simion, who conceded defeat early on Monday after initially declaring himself the winner on X.

It came as a surprise since Dan was a distant second in the first round of election two weeks ago.

With 99.8 percent of polling stations counted by 1:50 am on Monday, Dan had won 53.8 percent to Simion's 46.2 percent. The turnout of 65 percent was the highest since 1996.

"Elections are about communities — and in today's elections a community of Romanians who want a profound change in Romania won," said Dan, a mathematician by training before entering politics about 10 years ago.

"It's a moment of hope," Simion, 38, thanked his more than 5 million voters and promised not to disappoint them in the future. In the first round of the election, he led with 41 percent of the vote, almost double Dan's 21 percent.

"We were alone against a whole system, alone against everybody. I'm proud of you and I hope I represented you with honor," he told supporters.

"It's a bitter feeling, but this election is just the beginning."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen congratulated Dan, considered a pro-EU politician, on his victory.

"They (Romanian people) have chosen the promise of an open prosperous Romania in a strong Europe," von der Leyen wrote on X. "That's a relief," Carl Bildt, former Swedish prime minister and co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations, wrote on X after two exit polls predicted a win for Dan.

Glenn Greenwald, a famed journalist and author, criticized the

West for nullifying Romania's election earlier because their disfavored candidate won.

"Then, polls show he'd win in the do-over, so they just banned him from the ballot. Now their puppet candidate finally won, and they claim 'democracy' has triumphed," Greenwald wrote on X, referring to the election win in November by Calin Georgescu, a politician and agronomist who was described by Brussels as "far-right," "pro-Russia" and "anti-NATO".

Telegram founder Pavel Durov revealed that a Western European government approached the messaging app asking it to silence conservative voices in Romania ahead of the elections.

"I flatly refused," he wrote on X, without naming the country. In another post hours later, he named Nicolas Lerner, the head of French intelligence, as the one asking him to do that.

Initial victory

In Poland, Rafal Trzaskowski, 53-year-old mayor of capital Warsaw since 2018, won the first round of the country's presidential election on Sunday against rival Karol Nawrocki, who is viewed as a right winger.

Trzaskowski, part of Prime Minister Donald Tusk's Civic Platform party, won 30.8 percent of the vote while Nawrocki obtained 29.1 percent, according to an Ipsos exit poll on Sunday evening after voting ended. The two will face off in the second round on June 1.

"This result shows how strong and determined we need to be to win the presidential election," Trzaskowski told supporters on Sunday evening.

In Portugal, the ruling center-right coalition Democratic Alliance won 32 percent of the vote in Sunday's general election, making it the strongest political force in the country. Its 89 seats in parliament are still far fewer than the 116 seats needed for a government majority.

Chega, which is viewed as a far-right party in the EU, earned 22.56 percent. The Socialist Party won 23.38 percent.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Top: Nicusor Dan, mayor of Bucharest and an independent candidate, speaks after the first exit poll of Romania's presidential runoff in Bucharest on Sunday. DANIEL MIHAILESCU / AFP
Above: Portugal's Democratic Alliance leader Luis Montenegro celebrates following the exit polls in Lisbon on Monday. VIOLETA SANTOS MOURA / REUTERS



People transfer a girl to safety following an Israeli airstrike in the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza Strip on Sunday. ABDUL RAHMAN SALAMA / XINHUA

Gaza blockade to end amid fresh offensive

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadailyapac.com

After bowing to regional and international pressure, Israel said on Sunday it is allowing basic humanitarian aid to enter Gaza after weeks of blockade, but its military incursions remain undeterred even as possible famine looms over the enclave.

The announcement, which did not specify the resumption date, followed the 34th Arab League Summit and the 5th Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Iraq.

The meetings decried Israel's "war crimes," demanded an immediate ceasefire and the reconstruction of Gaza, and rejected all moves that would uproot the Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the "immediate" resumption of aid at a security cabinet meeting on Sunday. The decision came at the recommendation of military officials, his office said.

On Monday, Netanyahu said Israel will "take control" of the whole of Gaza, as the military pressed a newly intensified campaign in the territory.

"The fighting is intense and we are making progress. We will take control of all the territory of the Strip," Netanyahu said in a video posted on Telegram.

Also on Monday, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World

Health Organization, warned of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, saying that "2 million people are starving".

On the ground, the Israeli military issued an evacuation call to Gazans in the southern city of Khan Younis and nearby areas ahead of what it described as an "unprecedented attack".

The call came after the military announced it had begun "extensive ground operations" in an expanded offensive against Hamas, and following airstrikes that rescuers said killed at least 22 people on Monday.

Ceasefire urged

In a post on X, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated his call for a permanent ceasefire. He said nothing justified Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attacks on Israel, and nothing justified the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

He also condemned violence in the occupied West Bank.

The summits in Iraq also urged the international community and influential states "to fulfill their moral and legal obligations" to advocate for a cessation of bloodshed and ensure unhindered humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Abdul Wahed Jalal Nori, a lecturer in the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies at

International Islamic University Malaysia, said the declarations made at the summit "remain largely symbolic unless backed by tangible political and legal steps".

"It appears to me the summit is reactive to United States President Donald Trump's controversial statements rather than proactive in advancing a unified Arab vision for Palestine," said Abdul Wahed, who authored *State-Building Under Foreign Occupation: The Case of Iraq 2003-2008*.

Wrapping up a tour to the Middle East last week, Trump said he wanted to "take" the Gaza Strip and turn it into a "freedom zone". He also said there were "a lot of bad things going on".

Abdul Wahed said: "Bad things are happening" is an ambiguous and depoliticized phrase that dilutes the severity of the situation — mass displacement, destruction of infrastructure, civilian deaths, and potential war crimes are not merely 'bad things' but violations of international law.

"Such wording allows Trump to appear concerned while avoiding direct criticism of Israel, maintaining political neutrality in language while enabling asymmetrical violence through policy."

Agencies contributed to this story.

Fallen WWII Chinese laborers honored in Japan

By JIANG XUEQING in Inawashiro, Japan
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Diplomats and advocates for Japan-China friendship gathered in Inawashiro, Fukushima Prefecture, on Sunday to reflect on the past and renew their commitment to a peaceful future between the two countries.

A commemorative tree-planting ceremony marked completion of the renovation of a monument honoring fallen Chinese laborers.

Historical records show that near the end of World War II, about 40,000 Chinese people were forcibly brought to Japan and subjected to extremely harsh labor and inhumane treatment, resulting in the deaths of nearly 7,000 individuals.

About 1,000 were sent to Fukushima, where 25 died as a result of persecution.

To mourn the Chinese laborers and stand against militarism, a 5.2-meter-tall monument was unveiled in 1971. After being expanded in 1988, a second major renovation began in 2023, which was recently completed with the support of Japan-China friendship organizations.

"This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against

Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War," said Cui Wellei, Chinese consul general in Niigata.

"At that time, Japanese militarism committed heinous crimes against the people of China and other Asian countries and also brought profound suffering to the Japanese people themselves."

Cui said a correct understanding and attitude toward the history of Japanese militarist aggression is an essential precondition for Japan's postwar reintegration into the international community and for earning the trust of its neighbors.

"China's emphasis on remembering history is not about perpetuating hatred, but about learning from the past, looking to the future, and jointly cherishing and safeguarding peace — so that the people of China and Japan can enjoy lasting friendship and peace for generations to come."

He called on Japan to deeply reflect on its historical responsibilities, reject the revival of militarism, and adhere to the spirit of its pacifist Constitution.

Itsuo Hashimoto, vice-president of the Japan-China Friendship Association, said China plays a vital role not only in its relationship with Japan, but also on the global stage.

"Japan and China must work not

only for their own development, but for Asia, for the world, and ultimately for all humanity."

"From this perspective, we must learn from the histories of both countries — not simply to dwell on the past but to build a future that rises from it and moves forward," he said.

Hisashi Endou, president of the Fukushima Prefectural Japan-China Friendship Association, recalled that while Chinese prisoners of war were forced to work on a hydroelectric power plant in Fukushima and 25 died, China treated Japanese POWs and civilians with compassion and repatriated them after the war.

Spirit of gratitude

The monument honoring Chinese laborers was built with support from one such repatriated Japanese POW, reflecting a spirit of gratitude and reconciliation that continues to this day.

"We hope today's tree planting ceremony will further strengthen the bonds between our nations, and that the red plum trees will continue to bloom every year as a symbol of our shared desire for lasting friendship," Endou said.

Among the participants was Shinji Oguma, a member of Japan's House of Representatives, who joined fellow

Pakistani FM's visit to enhance cooperation

By ZHANG YUNBI
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

China has said it is aiming at better strategic communication and coordination with Pakistan, and has vowed to further constructively promote a full-scale and lasting ceasefire between Pakistan and India.

The Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar is visiting China from Monday to Wednesday.

Asked about the visit, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners who enjoy close high-level exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

"China is willing to take this visit as an opportunity with Pakistan to further implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen strategic communication and coordination, and deepen exchanges and cooperation in various fields," she said at a daily news conference in Beijing.

On May 10, Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with Dar, expressing concern over the escalation of the Pakistan-India conflict.

Asked if Dar's visit is related to the current tensions, Mao said, "Both India and Pakistan are important neighbors of China, and China attaches great importance to both China-India ties and China-Pakistan relations."

China remains committed to developing relations with all neighboring countries, she said. It always upholds the philosophy and guidelines of fostering an "amicable, secure and prosperous neighborhood" and seeking amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, she added.

"We support and welcome that India and Pakistan realized a ceasefire and stand ready to continue playing a constructive role in achieving a full-scale and lasting ceasefire and in maintaining peace and stability in the region."

Mao also said Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp will pay his first visit to China from Wednesday to Thursday.

Briefly

UNITED STATES Biden diagnosed with prostate cancer

Former United States president Joe Biden has been diagnosed with an "aggressive form" of prostate cancer that has spread to his bones, his office said on Sunday. Biden, 82, was diagnosed on Friday after experiencing urinary symptoms, and he and his family are reviewing treatment options with doctors, according to a

statement by his office. "While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management," the statement said. US President Donald Trump said he was "saddened" by the news. Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men, with the American Cancer Society reporting one in eight men in the US are diagnosed with it over their lifetime.

FRANCE Air traffic breakdown hits flights for 2nd day

Flights were disrupted on Monday at Paris' Orly airport, though the situation was improving one day after an air traffic control system breakdown caused the cancellation and delays of hundreds of flights. The breakdown hit on Sunday, affecting thousands of passengers. Some had already sat in planes at Paris' second-biggest air-

port when flights were canceled. The control tower breakdown forced the cancellation of about 130 flights in and out of Orly on Sunday, officials said. The DGAC French civil aviation authority said it was "asking airlines to reduce their flight schedules by 15 percent" on Monday. The authority blamed an air traffic control "malfunction". An airport source said there had been a "radar failure".



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Editor's note: Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. China Daily will come out with a series of stories highlighting Chinese cities' special connections with sister cities, mutual understanding, trust and friendship between peoples of different countries and cultural backgrounds, and shining light on "city diplomacy".

TWIXT TOWERS OF SHENZHEN, EDINBURGH CASTLE

You thought a kilted businessman in Scotland and a suave entrepreneur in China have nothing in common? Think again

Scotsman's mission to bridge cultures through creativity

By ZHENG WANYIN in Edinburgh and WANG XU in Shenzhen, Guangdong

The name of Jim Galloway is indispensable when acknowledging those who have worked behind the scenes to advance the friendship between Edinburgh and Shenzhen.

As a precursor, Galloway, who was former head of enterprise and innovation at the City of Edinburgh Council, was in the core team to figure out what the cooperative relationship between a Scottish and a Chinese city should look like and helped determine that business-to-business partnership in the creative industry — an area where both cities excel — should be the focus.

In 2013, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Shenzhen and Edinburgh to establish the Edinburgh-Shenzhen Creative Exchange, a project that provides incubators and productive spaces in both cities for creative and technology enterprises to explore opportunities in each other's market.

Since its inception in 2015, the center has organized a series of activities, including two-way visits, investment conferences, promotional events, creative enterprise competitions, and more, with Galloway playing an active role in all of them.

These exchanges yielded fruitful results, culminating in the official twinning between the two cities in 2019, and Galloway was the principal negotiator and the author of the sister-city agreement.

The past decade or so has been a journey of discovery for Galloway, during which he moved through busy streets and narrow lanes of Shenzhen during his 10 visits at least; slowly came to know its history, demographics, cityscape, industry and culture; and formed long-lasting bonds with the people there, whom he calls *xiongli* and *meimei*, or brothers and sisters.

The 63-year-old hesitated for a moment when asked why he had been so dedicated to promoting exchanges between the two cities. Then, he placed his hand on his chest and said, "When you've been to Shenzhen, there is something about the city that can get to your heart."

A futuristic city — driven by its young, dynamic and inclusive demographic, as well as a thirst for entrepreneurship and innovation — was the impression that struck the Scotsman on his first visit. "I immediately fell in love with the city and bonded with its people, and I want others to experience that as well," Galloway said.

The journey of discovery is never without its hitch. When asked about the obstacles he had faced, Galloway recalled the "chaos" on the day the incubation center opened in Shenzhen in 2015.

The day before, he worked until 3 am and got up at 7 am to dress in Scottish traditional attire, including a wool jacket, a knee-length kilt, and the kilt hose socks. The Scotsman, clad in the heavy Highland wear, ran back and forth on a 36°C summer day with 80 percent humidity, sweating buckets, putting up with hunger as he was too busy to grab a bite, yet still trying to arrange everything in order.

"And the funniest challenge for a fully dressed Scotsman is maneuvering yourself through the city because everybody wanted a photograph with a man in a kilt. I must have been the most photographed person in Shenzhen that day," he joked.

The long day did not come to an end until midnight. For Galloway, it was a very busy, hungry, hot and sweaty day — but also a deeply memorable one.

In the years since, he has continued to work hard to carry on the legacy.

Even after leaving the city council in 2019 and founding his own consultancy company Edinburgh Global Limited, the priority of his business is still forging connections between Shenzhen and Edinburgh. He has also been actively involved in the All-Party Parliamentary China Group and the Scottish Parliament to promote opportunities in China.

"For me, it was more than a project, it was more than a job. It has become my mission to keep the relationship going," he said.

Even when geopolitical tensions got in the way, Galloway seldom thought of giving up and remains a firm believer in the power of frank and trusted dialogue. "And I am ready to be there and help make connections," he said.

By ZHENG WANYIN in Edinburgh and WANG XU in Shenzhen, Guangdong

In a trip that melded ancient castles with modern architecture, baggies with dim sum, and the skirt of bagpipes with the hum of electric vehicles, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Robert Aldridge, found a fascinating story in Shenzhen. It was one of shared ambition, entrepreneurial and innovative drive, and a dedication to preserving culture.

"Brilliant and fascinating trip," Aldridge wrote on X after he accompanied a trade delegation to Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in May last year.

At first blush, Edinburgh and Shenzhen may seem like a total mismatch — one a sprawling, sun-drenched technology hub, the other wind-swept and soaked in history — yet a closer look makes them look more like siblings. They are both open, vibrant, inclusive and innovative, qualities rooted in their knack for breaking the mold and bringing out the new.

Shenzhen was a testing ground for China's reform and opening-up, and in 1980 was designated one of the country's first special economic zones. Since then it has transformed itself from a small fishing village to a center of manufacturing, technology, finance and trade, its GDP last year being 3.68 trillion yuan (\$510 billion).

The city is often called China's Silicon Valley, and companies such as Tencent, Huawei and BYD, now global household names, were founded there.

This model of modernity and progress is now again at the forefront of China's efforts to further open up as Shenzhen leads the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

In Edinburgh, the spirit of innovation is also

deeply rooted, the blossoming shoots of that being its prowess in financial services, software engineering, data science and renewable energy, says Jim Galloway, founding director of the consultancy Edinburgh Global Limited and a former head of enterprise and innovation with the City of Edinburgh Council.

The Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th century produced intellectuals such as Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, who revolutionized the idea of society, trade, religion and more, and Edinburgh was widely called the Athens of the North, Galloway says.

Donald Wilson, a former lord provost of Edinburgh, talks of Edinburgh's reputation as a festival city, with 11 major international festivals taking place there last year.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe last year featured more than 3,300 shows from 58 countries and regions, infusing the city with fresh creativity amid the cultural intermingling.

"So you see the reason why the two cities admire each other," Wilson said. "In Shenzhen it's very easy to see that it is looking forward very quickly all the time. Edinburgh is an ancient historic city, but it has always prided itself on moving forward."

In 2013, Wilson signed a memorandum of understanding with Shenzhen on creative industries, something with which both cities thrive. Shenzhen is recognized as a UNESCO City of Design, and Edinburgh is the founding city of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

As outlined in the agreement, the Edinburgh-Shenzhen Creative Exchange opened in 2015 to provide incubators and productive spaces in both cities for businesses to explore each other's markets.

In 2019, the two cities officially twinned, something Wilson hailed as "a big step forward."

"We felt that the level of activities and

cooperation going on wanted a full collaboration and a full partnership, and that's what the sister-city relationship is all about.

"Sometimes you can sign sister-city partnerships, but they don't mean very much because there's nothing behind them. But this is not one of those. This is the one that is built from a solid base ... It is very easy to point to the success of the incubators."

By May 2019, the Edinburgh-Shenzhen Creative Exchange had provided 241 companies from both cities with local knowledge, business pitching and matchmaking, and logistical support, in which more than 100 Edinburgh businesses established connections or collaborations with counterparts in Shenzhen.

More than 60 events were hosted in the project's first four years, including investment conferences, promotional campaigns and creative enterprise competitions that awarded winners with free tickets and hotel accommodation in Shenzhen or Edinburgh, along with profile-raising opportunities.

With such a robust platform, business transfers take place with much greater ease, says Liz McAreavey, chief executive of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, which has organized at least three trade missions to Shenzhen.

"When we go to Shenzhen, if we say these are the kinds of businesses we are bringing, and these are the businesses they would like to meet, they arrange that for us, and that means real value. The business that gets done is a lot more than if we had to find our way around the city."

"We are also happy with the reciprocal arrangement. We have made space in our offices and host any businesses that want to come and stay for a while, making sure they have a worthwhile visit."

The exchanges have been supported by the city council, McAreavey says. "It is not just the business community, but also the city that wants to build that relationship, seize the value of the relationship with Shenzhen, and with China."

As part of this relationship, it has been customary for the lord provost of Edinburgh to travel to Shenzhen once during each term of office.

When Aldridge accompanied the trade delegation to Shenzhen last year, he met Shenzhen Mayor Qin Weizhong, attended the 20th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, and visited members of the Shenzhen Vialization Symphony Development Foundation.

Qin says: "Shenzhen is a brand-new city created by the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people as part of reform and opening-up, and it is a brilliant interpretation of socialism with Chinese characteristics on a blank sheet of paper." Qin emphasizes the cities' shared traits, including dynamism, vibrancy and innovation on the international stage.

On the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the twin-city partnership, Qin expressed a desire to deepen exchanges and practical collaboration at governmental, business and community levels. The focus is on working together in areas such as culture, tourism, creative design, trade, investment and technological innovation,



Creative businesses from Shenzhen and Edinburgh hold networking sessions in Shenzhen in May last year. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A girl dances with a robot at the Shenzhen Science and Technology Museum on April 21.



Freakworks shoots a commercial near Edinburgh for Shenzhen bottled water brand Ganten in 2019.

the aim being to deepen the friendship and adding to the prosperity of both cities.

Aldridge expresses delight in visiting Shenzhen and enjoying its hospitality, cultural richness and innovative spirit, particularly at the Cultural Fair. He acknowledges the strides made in collaborative efforts and says he is keen to expand the cities' partnerships in economics, trade, culture and education.

Global expansion

Among other things, the flourishing relationship has helped businesses in both cities to pursue global expansion.

Before the memorandum of understanding was signed, few people in Edinburgh would have known much about Shenzhen, says Andrew McRae, proprietor of Museum Context, a seller of licensed *Harry Potter* merchandise, and founder and chief executive of Elephant House International. The Elephant House cafe is the so-called birthplace of the *Harry Potter* series, where J.K. Rowling wrote parts of her novels.

"But the special relationship has raised awareness in the business sector in Edinburgh of the opportunities in Shenzhen," McRae says.

His decision to set up shop in Shenzhen was influenced partly by its young, dynamic population, with an average age of about 30. In the city McRae plans to have a space combining a shop and a cafe, and he aims to use the city as a springboard to expand his business to other cities in China.

"It is very much about the strength of Shenzhen being consumer-based, with a population always looking for quality products and having that awareness to experience a UK brand firsthand," he says.

"The friendly exchanges have given me the chance to build networks and explore opportunities. This is fundamentally important. When you're a small-business owner and you want to expand, you really need to find people who understand what you're trying to do."

McAreavey of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce says: "It is overwhelming to even think about where you should start if you want to trade with China. Picking a city is strategically important. Shenzhen is a great location when you think of the Pearl River Delta and its closeness to Hong Kong. Also, why go and start somewhere else when you have that solid platform, that strong friendship?"

The relationship between the two cities over 10 years has spawned interest in various industries in reaping its benefits.

Scottish spirits are a staple of trade between China and Scotland, and Iain Stirling, co-owner of Arbisie Highland Estate, a family-owned distillery, says Shenzhen acts as its gateway as it

exports its gin, vodka and whiskey to China.

Big names in Shenzhen such as Huawei and BYD are working with Scottish companies to facilitate knowledge-sharing in artificial intelligence and green transition.

Hanish Allison, chief executive and creative director of Freakworks, says he is happy to know that "I am not the only person in Edinburgh who understands Shenzhen."

Since 2012, the production company has made a series of 10 commercials for Ganten, a premium bottled water brand whose headquarters are in Shenzhen, and from then Allison was keen on opening an office in Shenzhen, which he considers "the best city in China".

Galloway of Edinburgh Global Limited says it is easy enough to quantify the business benefits in the cities' partnership, but the human relationships that it produces are not so easy to quantify.

He regards those like him involved in this effort "to turn nothing into something," *xiongli* and *meimei*, or brothers and sisters, he says.

Ma Jiangtao, director of the Edinburgh-Shenzhen Creative Exchange and founding director of the Doctorate Association, a non-profit for scholars and doctoral students worldwide, refers to the way the cities have handled any hiccups they have had in their relationship as true comradeship.

"We always stand by each other, which makes the journey less arduous," he says.

The Doctorate Association International Innovation Centre, founded by Ma, has been operating all Edinburgh-Shenzhen Creative Exchange activities since 2022.

For many, carrying forward this twinning has been a lifelong mission.

"We have worked tirelessly to bring it to fruition," Ma says. "So this relationship must not be reduced to mere formalities. Otherwise, I would

feel unworthy of the trust and support of others.

"More importantly, I believe that this relationship holds significance not only for Shenzhen and Edinburgh, but also for Scotland and the broader ties between China and the United Kingdom. We are living in a time of unprecedented global change, but despite the uncertainty, I believe this friendship can play its role. That is why I am willing to dedicate my whole life to this."

McAreavey says a return trip to Shenzhen this year is a certainty. "That is a priority. We've got a number of business deals on that. We also look forward to hosting delegations from Shenzhen and introducing businesses in Edinburgh."

She underscores a list of areas in which knowledge-sharing can be further promoted, such as manufacturing, bioscience, healthcare and net zero.

"We want to build on what already exists, and we make commitments to continue. ... It is important to continue striving to make meaningful links, keep doors open, allow friendly exchanges and collaboration happen, and work toward a better understanding."

Galloway echoes: "I'm a great admirer of Stephen Hawking, who once discussed how one of the key factors enabling humans to evolve much more quickly is our ability to communicate. As long as we keep talking to each other, we have the opportunity to understand one another."

Contact the writers at zhengwanyin@mail.chinadaily.com.cn

Online See more by scanning the code.

From right: A musician plays the trombone during the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival in 2021. JEFF J. MITCHELL VIA GETTY IMAGES
A performer dances at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on Aug 8. PA IMAGES
A street entertainer juggles on Edinburgh's Royal Mile during the Festival Fringe in 2023. JEFF J. MITCHELL VIA GETTY IMAGES

Fostering exchange of ideas and talent



Wang Xu Reporter's log

My 18 months in Shenzhen as bureau chief for China Daily has been a truly eye-opening experience. This bustling metropolis — a symbol of China's economic miracle — is more than just a manufacturing powerhouse. It's a hotbed of innovation, a city pulsating with entrepreneurial energy and a thirst for scientific advancement. And amid this whirlwind of progress, I've discovered a fascinating connection recently: a burgeoning partnership with Edinburgh, a city seemingly worlds apart, yet united by a shared vision for the future.

Shenzhen and Edinburgh, on the surface, appear to be an unlikely pair. One, a young, rapidly growing city fueled by technological innovation; the other, a historic capital steeped in tradition and academic excellence. Yet, this apparent contrast is precisely what makes their partnership so promising. It's a synergy of strengths, a fusion of East and West, old and new, creating a potent formula for progress.

The foundation of this partnership lies in their shared commitment to scientific research and economic development. Shenzhen, with its thriving tech sector and access to vast resources, offers the perfect environment for translating research into applications. Edinburgh, with its prestigious universities and research institutions, offers a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

This collaboration is already bearing fruit. Joint research projects in areas such as artificial intelligence, biomedical sciences, and renewable energy are underway, fostering knowledge exchange and accelerating innovation. The establishment of joint innovation centers and incubators is further facilitating the commercialization of research outputs, creating new businesses and jobs in both cities.

However, the benefits of this partnership extend beyond the purely economic. By working together, Shenzhen and Edinburgh are fostering a global exchange of ideas and talent. Researchers, entrepreneurs and students are flowing between the two cities, enriching both communities and creating a truly international ecosystem of innovation.

This cross-fertilization of ideas is crucial in tackling the complex challenges facing today's world. Climate change, pandemics and social inequality require global solutions, and collaborations like the one between Shenzhen and Edinburgh provide a model for how cities can work together to address these issues.

Looking ahead, I see immense potential for this partnership to deepen and expand. As both cities continue to invest in research and innovation, their combined strengths will become even more formidable. I envision a future where Shenzhen and Edinburgh become global hubs for scientific discovery and technological advancement, driving progress and prosperity for both their citizens and the world.

This is not just a story of two cities; it's a testament to the power of collaboration and the potential for global partnerships to shape a better future. Shenzhen and Edinburgh, united by their shared vision, are true demonstrators of "the earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Contact the writer at wangxu@chinadaily.com.cn



Visitors interact with a robot of Chinese tech firm Unitree at the 13th China Information Technology Expo at the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center on April 9.

WORLD

Trump, Putin hold talks over ceasefire in Ukraine

MOSCOW/WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump spoke to Russia's Vladimir Putin on Monday about peace in Ukraine after Washington said there was an "impasse" over ending Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II and that the United States may have to walk away.

Trump, who says he wants to be remembered as a peacemaker, has repeatedly called for an end to the "bloodbath" in Ukraine, which his administration casts as a proxy war between the United States and Russia.

Under pressure from Trump, delegates from both sides met last week in Istanbul for the first time since March 2022, after Putin proposed direct talks and Europeans and Ukraine demanded an immediate ceasefire. Both countries agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners each but failed to agree on a truce, after Moscow presented conditions that a member of Ukraine's delegation called "nonstarters".

The call on Monday was underway shortly after 10 am, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said, promising additional details after it concludes.

The goal for the call was to "see this conflict come to an end," she added.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the conversation "important, given the talks that took place in Istanbul" last week.

Shortly before the call, US Vice President JD Vance told reporters that Washington recognized there was an "impasse" in ending the conflict.

"We realize there's a bit of an impasse here. ... We're going to try to end it, but if we can't end it, we're eventually going to say: 'You know what? That was worth a try, but we're not doing any more,'" Vance said as he prepared to depart from Italy.

"The subjects of the call will be stopping the 'bloodbath' that is killing, on average, more than 5,000 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers a week, and trade," Trump wrote on his Truth Social website on Sunday.

"Hopefully, it will be a productive day, a ceasefire will take place, and this very violent war, a war that should have never happened, will end."

Trump, whose administration has made it clear that Russia could

face additional sanctions if it does not take peace talks seriously, said he would also speak to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and various members of NATO.

Putin has stood firm on his conditions for ending the conflict, despite public and private pressure from Trump and repeated warnings from European powers.

In an interview with Russian state TV broadcast on Sunday, Putin said that Moscow's aim was to "eliminate the causes that triggered this crisis, create the conditions for a lasting peace and guarantee Russia's security", without elaborating.

More attacks

On the ground, the conflict continued. Moscow on Monday claimed its forces had captured two villages in Sumy and Donetsk.

On Sunday, Russia launched its largest drone attack on Ukraine since the start of the conflict.

Ukraine's intelligence service said it also believed Moscow intended to fire an intercontinental ballistic missile on Sunday, though there was no confirmation from Russia that it had done so.

Russian defense units destroyed 35 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russian state news agencies reported on Monday, citing defense ministry data.

Zelensky, straining to restore ties with Washington after a disastrous February White House visit, met Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Rome on Sunday on the sidelines of Pope Leo's inauguration.

"I reaffirmed that Ukraine is ready to be engaged in real diplomacy and underscored the importance of a full and unconditional ceasefire as soon as possible," Zelensky said.

Also on Sunday, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer discussed the Russia-Ukraine conflict with leaders of the United States, Italy, France and Germany, a Downing Street spokesperson said.

"Tomorrow (Monday) President Putin must show he wants peace by accepting the 30-day unconditional ceasefire proposed by President Trump and backed by Ukraine and Europe," French President Emmanuel Macron said on X after Sunday's call.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) meets US Vice-President JD Vance in Rome, Italy, on Sunday.

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SERVICE VIA REUTERS

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Dried out lakes in Oud-Heverlee, the Belgian province of Flemish Brabant, as drained ponds at the Zoete Waters park undergo renovation, on Sunday. Belgium is currently grappling with one of its most severe droughts in over a century, with the ongoing dry spell badly impacting local agriculture.

FREDERIC SIERAKOWSKI / EPA-EFE

US tariff policy shifts result in uncertainty

Instability, unpredictability causing damage to businesses, experts warn

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco

lizhu@chinadailyusa.com

Despite recent reductions in US tariffs on Chinese imports, industry experts warn that the damage has already been done, with unpredictable policy shifts creating long-term uncertainty for businesses on both sides of the Pacific.

The White House announced last week that the 145 percent tariff on Chinese imports would be temporarily reduced to 30 percent for 90 days, effective May 14. The announcement comes just weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed sweeping tariffs early last month.

"It's significant that the two sides are talking, and that they both recognize that a deal is necessary. The tit-for-tat was pointless, and jacking up tariffs to a prohibitive level was always going to hurt both countries," Ker Gibbs, a partner at US-based business advisory Foresight Restructuring and former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, told China Daily.

However, Gibbs said the current agreement does not adequately address the issues, and it doesn't give long-term visibility to businesses that want to trade and make investments.

"The instability and unpredictability have been damaging to business, and with tariffs set to snap back after 90 days, the uncertain environment hasn't changed."

The tariff reduction has prompt-

ed an immediate surge in container bookings from China to the US. According to a Reuters report, the average bookings for the seven days that ended on May 12 soared 277 percent to 21,530 20-foot equivalent units from 5,709 TEUs for the average for the seven days that ended on May 5, container-tracking software provider Vizion said.

However, industry experts note that the constant policy shifts have caused lasting damage to business relationships that typically take years to build.

"The uncertainty and the way this has unfolded have done long-term damage. Relationships with suppliers have been built up over the years. Now, importers have no choice but to look for alternatives outside China, and it's impossible to make long-term commitments," Gibbs said.

Short-term approach

"Contracts typically extend 90 days to 12 months, but relationships are much longer. Factory owners need to know who they are working with, and what investments they need to make. This short-term transactional approach, and keeping everyone guessing about the next move, has consequences," Gibbs said.

"Without a long-term deal with China, the US becomes cut off from China as a supplier, and that's a problem. There are alternatives for some types of goods, like apparel and footwear. For other products like auto parts and

tools, it will take years to develop new sources," he said.

The technology sector faces severe challenges from the tariff uncertainty. Bob O'Brien, research director at Counterpoint Technology Market Research, noted that in 2024, about 70 percent of smartphones, 75 percent of mobile PCs (laptops and tablets), and about 80 percent of monitors imported to the US came from China.

He estimated that if import patterns remained unchanged in 2025, US importers would have to pay \$15 billion in tariffs. While companies may try to shift production to Southeast Asia or Mexico, the greatest challenge is "this fundamental uncertainty," he said.

A company that invests millions or even billions of dollars in a manufacturing plant, with 12 to 18 months of development time, could see their rationale behind the investment become invalid with another executive order, said O'Brien.

The uncertainty has led many companies to consider reducing their focus on the US market, Ross Young, vice-president of research at Counterpoint, told China Daily. "Companies are concerned they will have to operate at lower utilization, face higher costs, and ultimately raise prices. Tariffs are not healthy for the industry," he said.

Many companies are now considering whether to reduce their shipments to the US market and focus more on Europe, Asia, or other regions, Young said.

"Uncertainty is never good. Companies are considering skipping the US market in terms of their end products."

UK, EU agree on relations 'reset' deal

By JULIAN SHEA in London

julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

The United Kingdom and the European Union have agreed to the first reset of relations since the former's official exit from the trading bloc in January 2020. This came after months of negotiations that ended hours before the deadline.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and other leading EU officials were in London on Monday for a summit with Prime Minister Keir Starmer after the negotiations concluded.

One of the last sticking points was the issue of EU boats' access to fishing grounds in UK territorial waters. The topic and the symbolism of EU boats catching fish in UK waters were major rallying points for the Leave campaign during the 2016 referendum on the UK's EU membership, despite the fishing industry only accounting for 0.4 percent of the nation's GDP.

The new deal calls for EU fishing boats to be given access to UK waters until 2038, and for both sides to more easily export farming products to each other, thanks to reduced checks. The change means the UK will be able to export raw burgers and sausages to the EU for the first time since 2020.

The two sides also inked a formal UK-EU defense and security pact through which they will cooperate on information-sharing and military procurement. And they will work on a youth experience program, through which young people will be able to travel more freely between the UK and the EU and vice versa.

The sides also agreed to let UK travelers use swift EU e-gates at airports. And UK pet owners will find it easier to take their pets to Europe with them, thanks to new pet passports.

Additionally, the UK and the EU will link their carbon markets, so taxes on carbon-intensive goods, including steel and cement, are avoided when shipping products between the two markets.

Opening the summit with EU chiefs in London, Starmer said it "marks a new era in our relationship ... We are agreeing (on) a new strategic partnership fit for our times, providing real, tangible benefits."

Nick Thomas-Symonds, the UK minister responsible for post-Brexit relations with the EU, said the new agreement was "good for jobs, good for bills, good for borders and more ... Britain (is) back on the world stage".

Rachel Reeves, the chancellor of the exchequer, told business leaders that the deal was "about bringing more good jobs to our country, it's about reducing prices in the shops for consumers, as your costs fall as businesses, and, crucially, it's about our defense partnership with our allies".

However, Kemi Badenoch, leader of the opposition Conservative Party, called it "very concerning". "We're becoming a rule-taker from Brussels once again," she said.

For conferences, worried academics prefer Canada

By YANG GAO in Toronto

gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com

Fears over border scrutiny, discrimination and political tensions are prompting Canadian academics and professional organizations to pull back from conferences in the United States.

"There are a number of reasons why Canadians are unwilling to go to the United States," said Ann Travers, a professor at Simon Fraser University, and president-elect of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, or NASSS.

"We've had one of the professors in our member organization who was denied entry, and the next time he went, he was detained for three hours," Travers told China Daily. "Then they let him go — but he'd already missed his flight."

As a transgender scholar, Travers said concerns extend beyond logistics or nationality.

"For our members who may be

racialized or from one of the countries that is considered to be an increased security risk, and (for) trans people like myself, it's quite worrisome," Travers said.

NASSS initially considered canceling its Seattle conference altogether.

"We were becoming aware at the time that there are people in the United States who are also vulnerable and not leaving. (That's) because they're afraid about what will happen when they try to return," Travers said.

The shift has already affected conference logistics. NASSS has arranged a hybrid meeting with parallel venues in Vancouver and Seattle.

Asked how the hesitation might affect long-term US-Canada academic ties, Travers was candid.

"It's pretty deleterious," Travers said, adding that NASSS conferences normally draw around 400 attendees and foster "a real identity of critical sports scholars".

The deeper concern, Travers said, lies in the broader political climate. "We're seeing some of the most prestigious researchers in the United States relocating to Canada, or even to Europe."

The Work and Family Researchers Network, or WFRN, has announced it will relocate its 2026 biennial conference from Boston to Montreal, citing concerns raised by international members about safety and border scrutiny in the US.

"We heard from numerous leaders in our professional community who reside inside and outside of the United States, including leaders in Canada," said Jennifer Hook, president of WFRN.

"They expressed a strong sense of personal unease at the financial and personal risks involved in planning travel to the United States and a perception that their perspectives are widely held," she told China Daily.

Hook said newspapers in Canada

and Europe covered stories of academics being turned away at the US border. "They strongly encouraged us to relocate the event if it was possible to do so," she said.

WFRN officially confirmed the venue change in an April 10 statement, noting that feedback from its members reflected widespread concern about travel to the US and the ability to safely engage in open academic dialogue.

Hook acknowledged that the decision came at a cost. "We had already paid a \$36,500 nonrefundable deposit to our US venue," she said.

Hook confirmed this was not just a one-time response: "WFRN's board recently voted to return to Montreal in 2028 for our biennial conference."

In its official statement, the organization said the decision to relocate was "difficult and costly", but reflected its commitment to equity, inclusion and the free exchange of ideas.

In a jam



A cyclist rides through traffic as taxi drivers gather for a rally on a street in Paris on Monday as part of a nationwide demonstration. Taxi unions are locked in a dispute with the French government over changes to the fare structure for medical transport, in which the health service funds taxi rides to hospitals or to keep medical appointments for some patients. GEOFFROY VAN DER HASSELT / AFP

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COMMENT

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Making of new five-year plan key to achieving socialist modernization

Since their inception in 1953, China's Five-Year Plans have been instrumental in translating political vision into actionable policy. The 15th iteration arrives at a pivotal juncture for the country as it pursues the strategic objectives laid out at the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

China will basically achieve its socialist modernization by the year 2035, according to the strategic arrangements made at the 20th CPC National Congress. With only 10 years left for the country to achieve that goal, the importance the Central Committee of the CPC attaches to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) cannot be overestimated. It is not merely a development blueprint for the next five years, but executable instructions for achieving holistic progress, innovation-driven growth, and shared prosperity.

That explains why Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, reiterated that the formulation of the plan must integrate rigorous research, public consultation and consensus-building, ensuring that it reflects both the Party's leadership and the people's needs.

He emphasized the significance of coordinating the domestic and international imperatives in making the new five-year plan. He particularly underscored the critical importance of scientific planning and consistent implementation, with a clear understanding of the variables and volatility of the international situation, which will have a considerable impact on the country's domestic development.

Soliciting feedback and suggestions from officials, the public, experts and scholars through various channels reflects a dedication to legitimacy and feasibility.

By engaging diverse stakeholders, the plan seeks to address regional disparities, sectoral challenges and social expectations, thereby enhancing policy coherence and public trust. Such inclusivity is a recognition that China's complex development landscape — from urban technology hubs to rural agrarian communities — demands nuanced, localized solutions.

Continuously improving people's well-being and bringing real benefits to them is an important aspect that Xi stressed in the making of the new plan. He called for the down-to-earth efforts

of governments at all levels to address residents' immediate concerns. Only by continuously raising people's sense of happiness, gain and security with concrete policies and approaches will the fundamental worthiness of modernization be manifested.

That is why Xi emphasized the importance of securing the stable growth of employment, smooth running of enterprises, steady expansion of the market, and the importance of prioritizing high-quality development guided by the new development philosophy. Central to this approach is continued reform to enhance the socialist market economy, promote high-standard openness, and cultivate a new development pattern that balances domestic and international economic dynamics.

Human capital is the linchpin of modernization. The plan's focus on science and education — including STEM, innovation and vocational training — is aimed at cultivating a skilled workforce capable of driving technological breakthroughs. By aligning education with labor market demands, China seeks to avoid the middle-income trap and sustain its edge in emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology.

But the 15th Five-Year Plan is more than just a domestic policy agenda; it is a statement of China's role in addressing global challenges. By advocating "high-standard opening-up", Beijing has signaled that it will not only resolutely open its door wider on a higher level but that it is also willing to engage with international protocols on trade, climate and governance.

The country's efforts to accelerate the transition to a green development model are indicative of this. The promotion of green industries, encouragement of sustainable consumption practices, and investments in pollution control, climate response initiatives and biodiversity protection, which align economic activities with environmental protection, will be institutionalized in the plan under the "ecological civilization" framework.

The CPC has accumulated a lot of experience in making such an overall development plan and having it implemented at all levels. To have such a cohesive plan to coordinate the economic and social development of such a large country also highlights China's governance capabilities.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Single-market integration and reforms help revive EU market

The euro's recent rally against the dollar has caught global markets off guard, but for European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde it is a "justified" and even opportune shift given that the US government has lately changed the state of play in three key pillars of international cooperation — the economy, politics and defense.

In an interview with French media La Tribune Dimanche published on Saturday, she attributed the currency's strength to the "uncertainty" of US policies, a thinly veiled critique of Washington's erratic fiscal and trade maneuvers.

Lagarde and other ECB policymakers believe that with the United States grappling with political uncertainty and inflationary missteps, the eurozone is emerging as a bastion of stability. This shift is not merely about exchange rates, it is a geopolitical signal. Europe, long overshadowed by the dollar's dominance, now has a chance to recalibrate its global financial influence.

However, while the euro's strength enhances purchasing power for imports, it risks stifling exports — a critical lifeline for Europe's industrial economies. The European economy remains fragile, with the eurozone's growth forecast for 2025, based on the ECB's prediction in March, hovering at a meager 0.9 percent. Growth will then accelerate to 1.2 percent in

2026. The economy grew by 0.3 percent in both the eurozone and the EU in the first quarter of 2025, slightly below the preliminary estimate of 0.4 percent, according to a second estimate from Eurostat released on Thursday.

The looming threat of failed EU-US trade talks adds urgency to Lagarde's message. The EU needs to "have a strong hand" should tariff negotiations with the US fail, she warned. The European Commission's outreach to other nations, a clear nod to diversifying alliances, hints at a strategic pivot away from overreliance on US markets.

Beyond trade, Europe's deeper malaise lies in its dwindling competitiveness. Once a leader in automotive and pharmaceutical innovation, the continent now lags in tech. Analysts have warned that Europe risks becoming a "beautiful but indebted open-air museum" without urgent reforms.

Political fragmentation further complicates recovery. Germany and France, the eurozone's traditional engines, are mired in economic stagnation and fiscal disputes, while southern economies such as Spain and Portugal offer rare bright spots. The ECB's Transmission Protection Instrument aims to stabilize borrowing costs across the bloc, but skepticism remains over its effectiveness in bridging the divide between core and

peripheral economies. The EU should deepen its trade integration with global partners to mitigate these risks. This is particularly important, given that in 2024, China and the EU remained each other's second-largest trading partner.

Notably, the EU is exploring alternative alliances, including with China, as seen during Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen's visit to the country. During the four-day visit that started on Saturday, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepen cooperation across a wide range of fields, creating new momentum for the development of bilateral ties.

A Foreign Ministry spokesperson said China stands ready to work with Denmark to consolidate political mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation, and promote the sustained, sound and steady development of China-Denmark comprehensive strategic partnership.

For China and other trading partners, Europe's maneuvering presents both risks and opportunities. The ECB may cut rates further to counter trade headwinds, but monetary policy alone cannot revive growth. The EU must accelerate structural reforms, deepen single-market integration and forge stronger global partnerships.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

US consumers 'eat' force-fed tariffs

Economists have warned from day one that the cost of the Donald Trump administration's tariff policy will be borne by US companies and consumers.

The administration in turn has painstakingly sought to convince the US public that foreign producers pay the taxes. But that is an endeavor that is doomed to failure with US retailers raising prices.

That explains why a war of words has erupted between the White House and US retailers over to what extent should US companies sacrifice their profits to help the US administration reduce its tariff policy's impacts on US consumers.

The White House and US companies have not reached any consensus in that regard.

Walmart CEO Douglas McMillon said on Thursday that given the magnitude of the tariffs, even at the reduced levels announced last week, the retail giant isn't able to "absorb all the pressure given the reality of narrow retail margins", indicating an imminent rise in the price of everything from bananas to children's car seats.

US President Donald Trump, in a Truth Social post, lashed out at the retailer, saying the company should sacrifice its profits for the sake of his economic agenda. "Walmart made BILLIONS OF DOLLARS last year, far more than expected. Between Walmart and China they should, as is said, 'EAT THE TARIFFS', and not charge valued customers ANYTHING."

But that has only served to expose the mounting pressure his administration is under to justify the rationality of its tariff policy.

Walmart has tried its best to pressure its suppliers, particularly those from China, to cut their prices, but they are at the bottom of the value chain and have little scope to do so.

In April, McMillon was among the retail executives who met with the president at the White House to discuss tariffs. But the US administration went forward despite warnings and has attacked other companies such as Amazon and Apple that are struggling with the disruptions

to their supply chains.

So although the White House claims the tariff policy will benefit US enterprises and consumers in the long run, that make-believe is not a balm for the bitter reality confronting the US business community and consumers.

The pressure the US administration has tried to put on Walmart and other US companies shows the predicament many major US companies are in as they are caught between the anger of consumers and the wrath of the administration.

The US administration is well aware that its tariff policy has cast a gloomy shadow over the US economy. But instead of reflecting on the wisdom of sustaining it, the administration has tried to pass the buck to the Federal Reserve, which it alleges refuses to support its tariffs by lowering interest rates.

On Saturday, the US leader repeated his calls for Fed Chair Jerome Powell to cut the benchmark rates, although Powell has warned the move could cause inflation to accelerate. Turning a blind eye to the true situation, the White House maintains that inflationary pressures have largely disappeared from the economy. So regrettably, instead of revoking the tariffs, the administration seems ready to double down on them.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the "negotiating leverage that President Trump is talking about here is if you don't want to negotiate, then it will spring back to the April 2nd level."

On April 2, the US president unveiled a sweeping 10 percent global baseline tariff, plus higher reciprocal tariffs on dozens of countries. On April 9, he paused the higher tariffs for 90 days, while leaving the baseline in place.

While the US administration is clearly trying to reduce the uncertainty for markets about what comes next to avoid another market meltdown, its insistence that the tariffs will be ratcheted back up if deals are not forthcoming will only add to the mounting pressure on the US economy as a result of the administration's ill-considered tariff policy.

What They Say

Official frugality vital for high-quality development

The central authorities have recently issued revised regulations on promoting frugality and opposing extravagance in Party and government organs, and issued a circular requiring all departments to strictly follow and implement them.

The revised regulations require officials at various levels to strengthen the conservation of resources, and strictly prohibit vanity projects. To that end, power holders must establish a rational view of political achievements and performance, and fully and accurately implement the new development concept.

They must avoid extravagance and excessively raising debt to seek short-term growth, so that limited financial resources can be used to promote key reforms for high-quality development, and do practical things of substantial benefit to the people.

In the process, they are obliged to ensure that the decisions and arrangements of the Communist Party of China leadership on high-quality development are strictly and faithfully implemented.

According to the circular, all Party and government organs should take the lead in living a frugal life. By strictly implementing the revised regulations, they are expected to promote an atmosphere of opposing waste throughout the whole of society.

This represents the latest moves of

the central authorities in the ongoing Party-wide education campaign to implement the "eight-point rules" on improving work conduct that was launched in March.

The Party leadership launched the "eight-point rules" in December 2012, with the aim of curbing extravagance. The set of rules later expanded into a Party-wide initiative for all members to improve their conduct. After more than a decade of implementation, the set of rules have been hailed as a "game changer" in China's governance.

Notably, an article by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, on implementing the guiding principles of the central Party leadership's "eight-point rules", which was published on Friday, emphasizes that good work conduct is critical to the survival of a governing party, stresses a strict approach in implementing the "eight-point rules", and requires leading officials at all levels to take the lead in setting a good example.

The article further points out that efforts to strengthen Party and government conduct must align with the key requirement of maintaining a close bond with the people, guard against any slackness in the process, and remain vigilant against new covert forms of misconduct, to prevent any resurgence of unnecessary spending.

The implementation of the "eight-point rules" is actually an important endeavor for the Party to earn public trust in the new era, requiring consistent and persevering efforts in this regard. Xi emphasized the vital role of maintaining the Party's tradition of hard work, diligence and frugality, which is related to the image of the Party, and the people's support for the Party and State cause.

The revised regulations should be strictly implemented and the "eight-point rules" should be followed not only during the Party-wide education campaign that is scheduled to run through late July, but also beyond, becoming a norm for all Party members.

To that end and to make the rules and regulations "grow teeth and thorns", as a commentary of People's Daily said, the authorities need to establish an effective supervision and inspection mechanism that can enable society, not only the watchdog departments, to better supervise the practices of power so that relevant malpractices can be spotted in time and any problematic Party members and officials can be held accountable for their misbehavior accordingly.

The supervision of the public can help prevent the wasting of government money, and be an effective deterrent to potential breakers of the regulations and rules.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC4A 3DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1300 Broadway, Suite 400
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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TSMC business shows futility of US move

US President Donald Trump's primary aim of imposing extremely high tariffs on imports from its trading partners, particularly from China, is not to earn more customs revenue but to compel foreign manufacturers to relocate their production units from China to the United States.

However, few foreign manufacturers want to invest in the US, because by moving their production units to the US, they could lose their competitive edge due to the lack of qualified personnel with the necessary skills, challenges in hiring local workers, difficulties in rebuilding reliable supply chains, and high rent and wages.

According to the annual report to shareholders published by Taiwan's Economic Daily News on April 21, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's Arizona plant reported a staggering loss of about NT\$14.3 billion (\$441 million) in 2024, the highest loss since the plant was established in the US.

Losses, however, have not been reported for the first time. The TSMC reported significant losses of NT\$4.81 billion, NT\$9.43 billion, and NT\$10.924 billion in its annual reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively, with cumulative losses exceeding NT\$39.4 billion over the past four years.

Interestingly, the TSMC suffered losses in its factories in Japan and Europe. According to its annual report, the TSMC's Japanese subsidiary, JASM, reported a loss of NT\$4.37 billion in 2024, the highest since the TSMC entered the Japanese market. The cumulative losses over the past three years reached NT\$7.93 billion, while the company's joint venture in Germany reported a loss of NT\$556 million.

It is no secret that the TSMC's decision to build chip factories in the US was dictated not by commercial considerations but by geopolitical pressure from the former Joe Biden administration under the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. The US has been encouraging foreign high-tech companies to invest in the country under this law. For example, last year, the TSMC received a \$6.6 billion subsidy to develop business in Arizona and increased its investment in the US by \$25 billion to build three factories.

The TSMC's problems in Arizona were predictable, as the US market suffers from high costs and a fragmented supply chain. Although the factories have been engaged in mass production since late 2024, the trajectory of the financial deficit indicates their problems are long term. After all, the semiconductor industry is highly complex, marked by the interdependence of upstream and downstream suppliers. The semiconductor industry relies heavily on the supply of high-quality components, necessitating strict maintenance of discipline in logis-

tics programs. Any disruption in the supply chain can lead to disruption or shutdown of production.

Many industry professionals have long questioned the US administration's urge to relocate chip production to the US. Morris Chang, founder of Taiwan's semiconductor industry, said he could not understand why Washington wanted to shift production from efficient Asian sites to the US.

The TSMC has estimated the cost of chips in Arizona to be 50 percent higher than its flagship production line in Taiwan, but according to Chang, the actual cost appears to be nearly double of that. The Texas Instruments veteran, who founded the TSMC in 1987 and was its chairman until 2018, said: "Maybe it's double the cost ... When the cost goes up, the pervasiveness of chips will either stop or slow down considerably."

In stark contrast, the company's Nanjing subsidiary continued to deliver strong and stable profits. According to TSMC's report, it posted a net profit of NT\$25.95 billion in 2024, more than the NT\$21.75 billion recorded in 2023 and NT\$20.48 billion in 2022. Over the past three years, the TSMC's Nanjing operations have consistently generated profits exceeding NT\$20 billion a year, a significant improvement over the NT\$12.28 billion recorded in 2021.

The company's strong performance is prompting boosting investment in 28 nanometer chip capacity at its Nanjing plant, indicating that the TSMC aims to

maintain its presence in the Chinese mainland market despite pressure from the US.

The new data presented by the undisputed leader of the global semiconductor industry is a striking example, showing that ill-considered and politically motivated decisions can lead to negative results. Its decision-makers understood that even with the advantage of fundamental research and development in modern industries, becoming a leader in manufacturing the most complex modern components is often impossible.

In 2024, China continued to lead the world in manufacturing, with its total industrial output reaching \$4.16 trillion, accounting for 26 percent of global industrial output. This figure is higher than the combined output of the other three leading manufacturing countries: the US, Germany, and India. At the same time, China continues to increase its manufacturing capacity, focusing on high-tech industries.

The ideal architecture of the future global economy should not be artificial politicization and witch-hunting, but specialization and cooperation based on trust.

The author, former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, is a professor at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

The author is former deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily. kangbing@chnadaily.com.cn

Policy to prevent poverty regression progressing well

Now that more than four years have passed since China eradicated absolute poverty, especially in rural areas, it is the right time to review the rural development situation.

From 1980 to 2000, China lifted more than 770 million rural residents — about 800 million overall — out of absolute poverty, a historical feat acknowledged by the international community. To achieve that, the entire nation was mobilized using national and regional preferential policies, and government officials were sent to villages to help provide support at different levels to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of 2020.

To prevent the farmers newly lifted out of absolute poverty from slipping back into poverty due to various reasons, a 2021-25 transition period was set by the government during which supportive policies were to continue, with government officials required to stay back in the countryside to not only consolidate the poverty-alleviation achievements but also vitalize the rural areas.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs data show that by the end of the third quarter of last year, the average personal disposable income of residents in the 832 counties where people were lifted out of absolute poverty was 12,384 yuan (\$1,717.76) — compared with 4,000-6,000 yuan set for 2020.

Also, preferential policies such as tax exemptions and government subsidies are provided for the investors to ensure they make decent profits.

The results of economic development in China's rural areas are self-evident. Even in remote and mountainous areas, we can see thousands of multi-story buildings, with many towns now boasting "economic development parks".

With limited farmland resources and a rural population of more than 460 million, it is impractical to expect farmers to make a fortune by growing crops on their small plots. That's why the central government has been encouraging rural residents to transfer the land-use rights of their farmlands to investors in order to increase their incomes by a high percentage. Under most circumstances, the arrangement has been win-win, with the villagers earning handsome dividends and the investors making decent profits by using economies of scale. This, in turn, has strengthened the country's food security by increasing the per capita yield of crops.

Being freed from toiling on their farmlands, the villagers can choose to migrate to cities to get better paying jobs, or to settle down in nearby towns if they can find employment there. As it is, China's urbanization rate has been increasing by about 1 percent per year over the past four decades. In fact, farmers-turned-workers today have a better sense of security compared with their urban counterparts, because apart from being able to earn a living in cities, they continue to own houses and farmlands — for which they receive rent — back in their villages.

For the relatively poor families in villages, the government offers especially favorable policies in order to ensure they get decent jobs in nearby towns or even in their own villages. In the previously poverty-stricken counties, investors are encouraged to establish factories to create more jobs for the local residents. Also, preferential policies such as tax exemptions and government subsidies are provided for the investors to ensure they make decent profits. As a result, more than 30 million jobs have been created, particularly for poor families, in the past four years.

All this shows the poverty eradication and rural vitalization program is progressing well. We are aware that the foundation of poverty eradication is weak, which increases the risk of some families slipping back into poverty.

Official data show that over the past four years, more than 5 million rural residents received special government assistance, so as to drastically reduce the chances of their falling back into poverty, indicating that continuous efforts are being made to ensure rural residents, especially those from poorer families, lead a decent life.

It seems that some of the supportive policies such as tax exemptions and subsidies including life/medical insurance, house construction and children's education should be continued for some families, particularly relatively poor families, in certain regions.

To make sure no needy family is left unattended, the central government-operated supervision system including the one designed to strengthen environmental protection should avoid any negligence or falsify information.

Lourdes Casanova and Anne Miroux

Chinese firms rise between hard and soft power

Chinese companies' remarkable ascent on the global stage tells the tale of impressive growth and transformation. Today, Alibaba, Huawei, Tencent and TikTok are household names across the world, and China's corporate giants have become major players in the global economy, redefining the dynamics of international trade, investment and innovation.

On the 1995 Fortune Magazine's Global 500 list, the United States was the undisputed leader, with 151 companies followed by Japan with 149. Three decades later, China has emerged as the primary contender to the US, with 128 companies on the 2024 list compared with the US' 139. China's big companies represent a diverse array of industries, including construction, oil, insurance, banking and technology.

Notably, several Chinese companies — the State Grid Corporation of China, Sinopec Group, China National Petroleum Corporation, China State Construction Engineering Corporation, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, and the China Construction Bank — now rank among the top 30 on the Fortune Global 500 list.

According to the Emerging Market Institute of Cornell University, if we consider companies with revenues exceeding \$1 billion, China has more "billionaire companies" than the US. Among the about 10,500 billionaire companies in the world, an estimated 25 percent are Chinese and 19 percent American.

Chinese companies are not only large; they also have operations and investments in all continents. Among the top 20 most popular destinations for the 330 largest Chinese companies in 2022, based on the number of companies with subsidiaries in a country, one finds not only Asian countries but also the US and several European economies, including Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy and France, as well as Brazil and Canada.

About 70 percent of big Chinese companies have subsidiaries in the US, and more than 60 percent in Germany, about 40 percent in the UK and the Netherlands, and at least 30 percent in Canada, Brazil and Italy. Chinese enterprises are also present in Africa, with subsidiaries or affiliates in most African countries.

Furthermore, since the late 2010s, greater investment scrutiny and limitations in the European Union and the US have made it harder for Chinese multinational companies to expand in those markets. In 2023, for example, greenfield investments by Chinese enterprises shifted away from advanced economies toward Asian and other emerging markets.

Xinyi Glass, for instance, announced it would invest \$11.5 billion in Indonesia in minerals, and Geely \$10 billion in a car factory in Malaysia. United Energy announced a \$8 billion chemicals project and two additional mega greenfield projects in renewables worth \$13 billion in Egypt. Also, BYD and Great Wall Motor have invested in Thailand, Mexico and

Turkiye; Gotion High-Tech and BTR in Morocco; Universal Scientific Industrial in Vietnam; and TCL in Saudi Arabia. A similar pattern is seen in China's cross-border mergers and acquisitions.

Such a shift in the geography and mode of entry of Chinese foreign direct investment reflects the strategic response by Chinese firms to the changing global economic and political landscape. Less focused on acquiring assets such as technology and natural resources, Chinese investment is blossoming in manufacturing in emerging economies, helping Chinese enterprises to gain a footing in those economies and intensifying competition for the traditional players.

Beyond physical presence, if we consider brand recognition, the US has dominated Brand Finance's list of the 500 most valued global brands since its inception, making up about 40 percent of the entries. There is a significant gap between Chinese enterprises' global size and presence and their global brand recognition. But Chinese enterprises, too, have advanced in recent years. In 2010, for instance, the share of Chinese enterprise in the ranking of the 500 most valued brands was barely 4 percent. Fast forward to 2025, to a drastically changed landscape: Chinese brands make up 14 percent of the Brand Finance's top 500 Global Brands.

Technology and innovation have enabled Chinese brands to gain global recognition across various industries, including e-commerce, media and enter-

Chinese companies continue to grow despite an increasingly fragmented global economy by shifting their focus toward emerging markets, especially in Asia.

tainment, telecommunications, and electric vehicles. This success has changed the global perception of Chinese products, moving beyond the traditional "Made in China" label.

Brands such as ByteDance (parent company of TikTok) in entertainment, Tencent and Century Games in multimedia and gaming, Huawei, Oppo and Xiaomi in smartphones, Lenovo in computers, Alibaba and Temu in e-commerce, Shein in online fast fashion, Haier, Hisense, Midea and TCL in consumer electronics, DJI in drone manufacturing, and Geely and BYD in EVs are well-known around the world today.

Twenty years ago, consumers outside of China probably could not name more than a couple of Chinese brands. The

case of the State-owned enterprise State Grid is particularly noteworthy. It is one of the top 10 most valued global brands, alongside another Chinese brand, TikTok, on the Brand Finance top 500 ranking list.

To address today's challenges, Chinese enterprises are changing their overseas expansion strategy and capitalizing on their vast domestic market. The reinforcement of China's antimonopoly legislation — through the establishment of the State Administration for Market Regulation in 2018 and the 2022 revision of the Anti-Monopoly Law — could bolster this advantage by making China's domestic market more unified. Especially important in that respect are the measures in the revised law aimed at prohibiting administrative monopolies and lowering local protectionism.

Chinese companies continue to grow despite an increasingly fragmented global economy by shifting their focus toward emerging markets, especially in Asia. There is room for Chinese brands to move further ahead and, hence, for Chinese corporations to boost their soft power.

Lourdes Casanova is a senior lecturer and director of the Emerging Markets Institute at Cornell SC Johnson College of Business, Cornell University; and Anne Miroux is a faculty fellow at the same institute. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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GLOBAL VIEWS

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Global cooperation in a changing world

The world might soon return to the original rules-based order that was established with the defeat of fascism and the establishment of the UN

The foundations of the modern global rules-based order were laid 80 years ago with the defeat of fascism and the establishment of the United Nations. The intention was to establish the framework for resolving conflict and fostering development.



The United States' "America First" agenda sabotages these aspirations, supplanting them with plutocratic anarchy designed to reward a select coterie of servile countries.

Often disparaged as ineffective, the 17 agencies established by the UN, including the World Health Organization, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, have changed the world in ways that the US administration does not acknowledge.

Some of their most important development works were done in what was then called the Third World. Years ago, some of these countries were still enslaved under the yoke of exploitative colonialism where poverty and disease were seemingly intractable facts of life. UN agencies achieved major milestones, including the virtual elimination of diseases that had plagued civilization for centuries.

The success of these programs fostered the emergence of the Global South. Their aspirations challenged the UN to adjust the application of the rules-based order to acknowledge the growing independence of the Global South that could no longer be disparaged as the wretched Third World.

China and Russia struggled with post-war reconstruction, unassisted by anything that resembled the Marshall Plan in Europe. This enabled the US-led West to establish the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the original General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, later to become the World Trade Organization, in the image of the West to do their political bidding.

These captured blocs were backed by regional security arrangements of which NATO is the most enduring. These are the foundations of the so-called global rules-based order the US administration is now intent on destroying.

The US is discarding this version of global governance pre-

cisely because the modern world of China and the Global South are exploring their development paths in their own way. The US can no longer dominate, manipulate or use the agencies of the UN to maintain US hegemony.

Two features challenge the legitimacy of the current global rules-based order. These challenges have triggered the "America First" policy, which is designed to cripple existing regional trade and security arrangements.

The first is the astounding growth of China which, by several measures, is now the second-largest economy in the world. The second feature is the morphing of the Third World into the more sophisticated and capable Global South.

For China, the anti-Fascist struggle began with the Japanese invasion in 1931. Resistance was further complicated by the civil war, so China faced a delayed and much more difficult recovery period following the defeat of Japanese fascism.

China's accession to the WTO in 2001 was a tonic that helped diversify a growing economy and drive it toward both self-sufficiency and the technological advances that today define China. China developed rapidly, but the agencies based on the US-dominated global rules-based order did not want to acknowledge this.

The US may believe that cooperation with the US means compliance with US directives, demands and policy objectives. It was an early iteration of the "America First" agenda.

The US government believes this objective can only be achieved by an overthrow of the existing structures with an explicit "America First" strategy that is an antithesis of the UN framework for resolving conflicts and fostering development.

The US wants to maintain its hegemony and assumes that China wants to take it away from them. China, without any hegemonic intent, wants to help shape the operating processes of the global rules-based order to bring benefits to Global South countries with recognition of China's significance. China works closely with the UN to achieve these objectives.

In 2021, President Xi Jinping outlined the Global Development Initiative and found ready support from the Global South. The US, along with its allies in the West, worried that the Global South was becoming a force that could not be conveniently

ignored, or subverted or nullified with sabotage and covertly supported coups.

There was increasingly a momentum to adjust operations to recognize the changed roles taken by China and the Global South.

The US may believe this is an existential threat to its global dominance. They cast trade as a global and regional security issue. This sense of insecurity drives the US' retreat from the global rules-based order and from the UN as the instrument of global engagement and development. As the result, the US has decided to substitute an environment where trade takes place according to the rules and whims of its leader.

However, the US' tariffs bluster overstates the US' importance to the world economy. Part of the economic growth of the future comes from the Global South. China understands the struggles and aspirations of other Global South countries and is actively working with them to expand economic prosperity.

Initiatives and agreements such as the Global Development Initiative and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, cooperation platforms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, APEC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, all represent a framework of economic development that is not solely dependent on the US for success. The development of alternative trade dispute settlement mechanisms, of more efficient cross-border trade settlement processes and infrastructure development support delivered through the UN and its agencies stand as the modern alternative to the destructive US version of unilateralism.

The path may not be smooth but nor will it lead to obedience to the US. With the collective efforts, it may return to the original foundations of the global rules-based order for resolving conflicts and promoting development that were laid with the defeat of fascism and the establishment of the UN.

The author is an international financial technical analysis expert and a former national board member of the Australia China Business Council. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

SONG GUOYOU

Prominent pacesetters

Global South countries are the driving force behind the rise of a new type of globalization

The United States has turned against the liberal international order and started embracing economic protectionism, which has contributed to the decline of globalization.

Once the prime champion of globalization, the US' failure to properly handle the internal distribution of interests has provoked strong resentment among those who lost out under the globalization model.



For a long time, the US tied its growth to globalization, believing that globalization was synonymous with Americanization, and it reaped substantial benefits from the globalization process. After the Cold War, some US elites became so confident that they proclaimed "the end of history". With this mindset, the US actively supported and promoted globalization to enhance its own power.

However, this perception changed with the 2008 global financial crisis and China's rapid development in recent years. Now, many in the US tend to believe that globalization has benefited other countries at the expense of US interests and the US must withdraw from globalization to protect its interests.

At a deeper level, the US' abandoning of globalization reflected a dramatic domestic political shift to conservatism due to the growing inequality, social tensions, political polarization and identity politics in the country, as well as the decline of liberalism and the rise of nationalism.

The domestic issues have brought mounting pressure on both US political parties and the government. While other countries have seen rapid growth thanks to globalization, the US seemed to have fallen behind, fueling a public outcry.

Due to domestic political influence, the governance philosophies of US administrations, from "putting the middle class at the center" to "America First", have all prioritized US interests. This has made it difficult for globalization to progress. Some US elites are well aware that poor domestic governance and political confrontation and division are the root causes of the country's widening wealth gap, worsening public security, and manufacturing decline. However, in the face of stalled institutional reform, they have opted to shift the burden outward, and tried to pressure the rest of the world to bear the costs of addressing the US' domestic challenges.

By flagging the populist narrative of "Make America Great Again",

Donald Trump won the presidential election for a second time. This meant the perception that globalization has undermined US interests will likely continue to prevail, and deglobalization may gain even broader public support in the years ahead in the US.

During Trump's first term in office, globalization was undermined in the process of the US exiting from multiple multilateral organizations and systems. This has led to a new type of globalization emerging characterized by the following features.

First, the driving force behind the new type of globalization is gradually shifting from the US to Global South countries, particularly the BRICS countries. While the US views globalization as detrimental to its interests and has therefore chosen to retreat from it, Global South countries see globalization as being in line with their interests and a pathway to economic growth, and demonstrate a strong commitment to advancing it.

Moreover, the US has increasingly employed economic sanctions in the pursuit of its strategic objectives. This has brought significant uncertainty to the economic development of some Global South countries. In response, these countries have realized the urgency of reforming the global governance system and subsequently intensified their efforts to advance the development of this new type of globalization.

From the turn of this century, the Global South has grown significantly stronger. Its collective share of global GDP has risen from around 20 percent in 2000 to approximately 40 percent in 2022, surpassing that of the US. Even if the US withdraws from the existing globalization framework, the Global South is still sufficiently capable of driving the development of this new type of globalization.

Second, the new globalization is shifting from the model of "dollars for manufactured goods" to a "manufactured goods for resources" model. The old US-led globalization was built on the dollar hegemony where the US, as a global financial center, used the dollar to import manufactured goods from other countries. In recent years, the US has increasingly abused this dollar privilege by issuing massive amounts of treasuries to fund imports. As a result, the US federal debt rose from \$20 trillion in 2017 to nearly \$36 trillion by 2024, with debt-to-GDP ratio climbing from 103 percent to over 120 percent. Essentially, the US is a debt-driven financial power sustained by dollar hegemony rather than a genuine trading nation.

In contrast, the new "manufactured goods for resources" model emphasizes equitable exchanges of finished products and resources between countries. Some nations provide resources such as minerals and energy, while others utilize their industrial capabilities to produce the goods in demand. This new model has fueled a robust rise in trade among Global South countries.

The key distinction between the two models lies in the fairness and equality. The "dollars for manufactured goods" model is inherently unfair, enabling one party to benefit disproportionately from the labor and resources of others while contributing little. The dollar to some extent serves as a global public good, but the US has gained huge and unfair benefits from the dollar's dominance.

Under the "manufactured goods for resources" model, countries are mutually dependent and equal in general, and engage in reciprocal exchanges based on their respective needs. Even when frictions arise, issues are more likely to be resolved through negotiations rather than hegemonic coercion.

Third, the governance model under the new type of globalization is shifting from the conventional to a new form of multilateral mechanism. The US administration has ignored and upset the traditional multilateral international system, and has been actively building bilateral and "minilateral" mechanisms. For example, it has strengthened the bilateral US-EU Trade and Technology Council, and has formed such exclusive cliques as the Chip 4 Alliance. These cliques and mechanisms are exclusive, ideologically driven, and limited in participation.

In response, Global South countries have begun to create a new type of multilateral mechanism in the pursuit of reliability, efficiency and fairness. Take the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as an example. It has steadily increased its investments since its founding in 2013. In 2023, its annual investment exceeded \$10 billion for the first time, and the cumulative investments in all projects approved amounted to \$50.47 billion. The BRICS mechanism stands as another prominent example of Global South cooperation.

The author is a deputy director and professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Decoding the sands of time

The Taklamakan Desert, China's largest desert and located in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, was once the central stage for numerous legends along the ancient Silk Road. However, as environmental conditions changed, the once-thriving human settlements were abandoned, standing in the wilderness with only sand and wind as companions. It wasn't until the late 19th century when foreign explorers ventured into the desert that people began to uncover many of the cultural heritage sites.

After more than a century, professionals are visiting these sites one by one. They tread on the sand, braving the strong winds and enduring the scorching sun overhead, as they strive to investigate and document their conditions.

They come from a special team of the fourth national census of cultural relics in China, which records the cultural heritage in the Taklamakan Desert, especially in its heartland.

"Many of the sites lie deep in the heart of the desert, inaccessible by regular vehicles like those used by other census teams," says Hu Xingjun, head of the team, who is also a researcher at the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. "We organized a special team focusing on these sites. This ensures we fulfill the census mandate of 'taking census of all those that should be covered'."

The national census began in 2023 and will end next year. Field investigations started in May last year in Xinjiang. Census takers visit the sites to survey and map them using real-time kinematic devices, take aerial photos with drones and other photos recording details, measure the size of sites, collect specimens, and record detailed information in the census database.

With more than a dozen members, the team's work has started recently and will run until the end of May.

Team members must repeatedly enter the desert, often for several days or even weeks at a time. They usually invite experienced drivers to form a fleet of sport utility vehicles stocked with fuel, food and water, equipment and daily necessities to enter the desert's depopulated zones, rest in tents, and survey each site firsthand.

Careful planning

Matyvsup Emirhazi, a 31-year-old team member and a researcher at Hotan Museum, says they have to make careful plans for each day in the desert, follow the plans strictly, and carry supplies for several extra days beyond their initial estimates to deal with unexpected situations.

In a desert where footprints are easily left, they have paid close attention to not leaving traces in their photos to ensure the effect. "We usually take the panoramic photo at first, without entering the site. After that we set foot on the sites to measure and take photos of details," says Matyvsup.

They are especially careful with the ecological protection in the desert by burning the garbage and taking away those items that cannot be incinerated, ensuring human garbage does not pollute the environment.

By WANG RU in Horgos, Xinjiang

Despite difficulties during the fourth national census of cultural relics in Horgos, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which borders Kazakhstan, members of the city's census team have completed most of their field work and achieved fruitful results.

Their stories epitomize the experience of more than 600 census takers working in Xinjiang to record the cultural treasure in their hometowns.

The team has four women members with an average age of 43. They have investigated and recorded the findings of 14 sites already known in the previous census, except one that is still inaccessible on a snowy mountain. They have added 18 new sites to the list.

"Although our team members are not young, we have managed to complete our tasks by crossing high mountains and traversing deep ravines just like our young counterparts," says Zhang Huiling, the 52-year-old leader of the team, who is also head of the cultural heritage department of Horgos' culture and tourism bureau.

Team members say local people have played a significant role providing information for finding new sites.

"We have actively promoted our

Taklamakan Desert slowly gives up its secrets as census takers tackle unforgiving environment, **Wang Ru** reports in Hotan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.



Clockwise from top: Members of the desert investigation team of the fourth national census of cultural relics hike in the Taklamakan Desert, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to visit cultural heritage sites. Team members cook in their campsite in the desert. Members of the team at their campsite. A bird's eye view of the campsite. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

At the end of every day's work, they report the all-clear with satellite phones to cultural heritage authorities, providing reassurance.

Team member Matkasim Tumor, 57, says they often have to save water, a scarce commodity.

"With limited loading capacity, we have to take a lot of supplies. For example, driving 1 kilometer requires 1 liter of gasoline, so we need to carry a lot. We also need to load daily necessities like tents, desks, chairs and pans. Therefore, there is not much room for water. We each are allocated two bottles of drinking water one day, and 10 pieces of disposable wet tissues every two days for cleaning," he says.

Sometimes camels join to help

carry goods and materials. "In the past when we didn't have SUV, camels played a major role helping us carry goods. Now I still believe they are the best partners in the desert, because vehicles can break down or struggle with sand dunes, but camels' adeptness at traversing the desert is unmatched," says Matkasim, who is richly experienced in desert archaeology.

But the animals are not always reliable, since they can be unpredictable.

For example, during their visit to Yuansha site, an ancient city from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), now in the heartland of the Taklamakan Desert, the team

encountered a series of unexpected challenges in March. Two of their camels suddenly bolted, one of the vehicles malfunctioned and was unable to tackle dunes and to round it off, a sandstorm hit the team.

Faced with these circumstances, team members had to solve the problems one by one. Camel handlers went to pursue the runaway animals and team members leveled the sand dunes to facilitate the vehicle's passage.

The team members still had to complete their census tasks, and walked to many of the sites when their vehicles went back to transport supplies the camels left. They seized every minute to work, as they could not take the risk of staying too

long in the desert with their limited supplies of only 15 days. Finally, they spent 14 days completing the work, and took a census of all the 79 small sites covered in Yuansha ruins spreading over an area nearly 100 kilometers long.

Being persistent

Ediris Abdurusul, a distinguished 74-year-old archaeologist with a remarkable track record of leading close to 100 expeditions in the desert over the past 46 years without any accidents, has also joined the team as a consultant. He led many breakthrough discoveries in Xinjiang, including the excavations of the Xiaohe cemetery, a site of Bronze Age cultural remains from

4,000 to 3,400 years ago. He was also known for the discovery of a naturally preserved female mummy called the "princess of Xiaohe" two decades ago.

He says people often say the Taklamakan Desert is "the sea of death", referring to its harsh environment for human habitation. However, historically, that's not true, as the desert once had many rivers that nourished people for millennia.

In his surveys in the Keriya River Basin in the desert, he found sites from 4,000 years ago to the Tang Dynasty (618-907). He also found ancient people preferred to live by the river, adapting their habitats continuously in response to changes in the watercourses over time.

With the rich cultural remains still at the sites, they have carried out a series of explorations and excavations in the desert.

"Doing archaeological work in the desert is very tough, but we have done a good job over the decades and found quite a number of ancient sites. Teamwork has played a major role in the process," he says.

The first time Matkasim entered the desert for archaeological studies was in 1990, when he followed Ediris to study the Niya ruins, remains of Jingjue state on the ancient Silk Road from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD. Since then, he had participated in multiple desert archaeological studies under the guidance of Ediris, and has grown into a mature desert archaeologist.

"Working in the desert is so arduous that I have considered giving it up, since we often had to stay in the desert for 20 or 30 days," says Matkasim. "I guess I could persist because I still love the work, the surprises of seeing ancient sites are always impressive."

He has learned a lot from Ediris. "His conscientiousness and attention to details have greatly influenced my style of work."

"When organizing an academic trip to the desert, he always considers every detail, down to reminding us of taking away cigarette ash. Learning from him, I was very careful when I led the teams. Over the past 35 years, my teams have remained accident-free as well," he says proudly.

On Jan 1, Matkasim retired from the culture and tourism bureau of Hotan prefecture, but he agreed to help complete the census work until next year. He has imparted much of his experience in the desert to Matyvsup, a young member of the team.

"Before this census, I worked in the Hotan Museum and was engaged with display design," says Matyvsup. "I had never had a chance to see cultural heritage in the desert as a local of Hotan. Therefore, I have been very excited participating in the census work, which allows me to have hands-on experience working in the desert."

"I treat Matkasim as my teacher. I have not only learned professional knowledge from him, but also his experience living and working in the desert, which can hardly be taught without practice. Now he has retired, and I will carry on the torch to give full play to what I have learned," he adds.

Contact the writer at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn

Counting on courage to record history



Census officials from Horgos, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, visit cultural heritage sites in the city to investigate and record their findings. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

work among the public by spreading brochures introducing the census," says Yan Ping, a 36-year-old member of the team.

"To our surprise, we received a great deal of feedback from people about the possible cultural remains they had noticed in daily life and then we investigated the sites. As of now, most of the new sites we have found came from local people's reports."

Yan and her colleagues re-discovered the site of a *karun*, meaning in

Manchu language a sentry post, which was established in border areas during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It was recorded as disappeared in the third national census of cultural relics, which was carried out from 2007 to 2011.

According to Yan, they followed previous satellite positioning data on the site to look for it in July last year but initially couldn't find traces. Unwilling to give up, they began to scour the surrounding areas.

After two days they found

remains of a building with a format very similar to other existing *karun* in Horgos. Its relative location to reference points, like a cliff, a snowy mountain and trees, was similar to its old photos.

After consulting experts, they were sure this is the *karun* they were seeking.

"A main reason we could find it this time is that we have more advanced equipment than before, which could guide us anywhere we wanted to go to in a more accurate way. This dis-

covery is a big reward for us in this census," says Yan.

Many of Horgos' sites are in remote mountainous areas where few people can access. Team members have to improvise. They often saddle up and ride horses or hike in the mountains. In border areas they are often accompanied by frontier guards.

Yu Baoqin, a 52-year-old team member, says it was not easy to complete their tasks. When their field work started in July last year, they visited mountains with no trees to

provide any shade. Locusts were rampant, posing a big challenge.

"When we visited sites on the Hantian Mountain last year, every time we opened a bowl of instant noodles, locusts jumped into our faces and into the bowl. It seemed to be a competition between people and the locusts to see who could gain the first bite," says Yu.

Riding horses sometimes can become a challenging experience for them as well. Zhang recalls last July, they went to check some unknown tombs local people reported to them on a mountain. On their way back, they were riding horses on narrow mountain paths, but one of the horses was suddenly startled and began to buck. A team member on it fell off. Luckily, he was not badly injured.

Worried that it would startle other horses, team members all jumped down from their horses and began to hike in the mountains by themselves. The horses, instead, were led by herders to return. Finally, team members spent more than five hours walking back to the city.

"Although we met a lot of problems, we viewed them as nothing but experiences in life and haven't felt frightened to face them. We are so honored to be members of the census and all we have thought is to accomplish the tasks in a satisfying way," says Yan.

LIFE



Guest speakers attending the event include (from left) Eyup Saritas, director of a Turkish cultural center in Beijing; Michael Crook, Chinese Government Friendship Award recipient; Ji Na, Michelin Sommelier Award winner; Zhang Yuxin, with Pinpin Tea company; Gary Sigley, professor at the Australian Research Center, BFSU; He Mingxing, professor at the School of International Journalism and Communication, BFSU; and Xu Xue, executive director of the Academy of Certified Chinese Tea Master.

Gary Sigley, a professor from Australia at Beijing Foreign Studies University, says his mother, in her 90s, still enjoys several cups of English-style black tea with milk and sugar each day.

A few years ago, he made her a cup of Pu'er tea from Yunnan province, which marked her first encounter with Chinese tea. "I placed a piece of sun-dried Pu'er on her palm," he recalls. "At that moment, an elderly Australian woman was holding a cup of fresh tea grown on an ancient tree in Yunnan. I suddenly realized that tea is a medium of friendship between different nations and peoples."

"Tea is a cultural treasure shared with the world by the Chinese people. Tea culture is not just a knowledge system about how to brew or taste tea, it is a philosophy of life. In a single cup of tea, we share not just flavor, but also knowledge, emotions and wisdom."

Sigley recently attended a cultural event themed "Brewing Cultures, Bridging Boundaries," co-hosted by China Daily and Beijing Foreign Studies University, to celebrate the upcoming International Tea Day on Wednesday — a global occasion that honors the rich traditions, cultural significance, and economic impact of tea.

Since 2008, Sigley has immersed himself in the landscapes and stories of Southwest China, focusing his academic research on the Ancient Tea Horse Road and the region's rich tea trade networks.

Over the years, he has spent time with scholars, tea farmers and merchants. These experiences transformed him into what he calls a "tea traveler-scholar."

"I never had any formal education in tea culture or arts. I'm like Pu'er tea in that I absorb everything, and my knowledge ages over time," he says.

Each morning begins with a cup of Yunnan black tea — a ritual that gets his mind going and prepares him for the day.

"Tea only grows in certain areas, but many people around the world want to drink tea, so it has to move," he explains. "When the tea moves, it creates connections between production and consumption zones, which is how cultural routes like the Ancient Tea Horse Road began."

This mobility, both physical and symbolic, is what makes tea so meaningful. "It is a plant with which we have strong interaction. There is the plant and its ecology. It's a metaphor for our Earth."

In the face of climate change, Sigley views tea as a symbol of harmony between people and nature. "If we want our future generations to enjoy tea, we have to make sure the ecology of the plants is preserved and maintained."

Sigley's love for tea also stems from Australia, where it is a daily staple. "Australians really love their

Steeped in history, Chinese tea crosses borders

Rich traditions brew meaningful connections between cultures, economies, emotions and nature, **Li Yingxue** reports.



Above: Beijing Foreign Studies University students perform to open the "Brewing Cultures, Bridging Boundaries" tea cultural event at the university on Saturday. **Right:** A booth at the event serves tea to the attendees. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

tea. Per capita, they drink more than the British," he says.

He recalls the rustic ritual of "bush tea" made by boiling black tea over an open fire in a "billy can." "Sometimes the flavor of the eucalyptus goes into the tea ... and you drink it underneath the stars."

Today, Sigley sees tea culture evolving in Australia as young people embrace Chinese traditions. "Young people have opened Chinese-style teahouses, promoting *gongfu* tea, tea ceremonies, and the Zen-inspired lifestyle of 'tea and meditation as one.'"

He describes this emerging movement as a form of "tea diplomacy" and envisions future collaborations through cultural exchanges, research dialogue, and sustainable business ventures.

Others are echoing Sigley's belief in tea as a global connector. Eyup Saritas, Sinology professor and

director of Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center in Beijing, believes tea is a vital cultural link between China and Turkey.

"From the 1840s to the 1950s, whether in big cities or small towns, cafes — which in Turkey are essentially teahouses — were everywhere," he says. "For the past three centuries, tea has been an inseparable part of our daily lives."

Saritas notes that since China's reform and opening-up, cultural exchanges between China and Turkey have grown, and Chinese tea culture is gradually influencing Turkish youth. "Young people in Turkey really like Chinese tea," he says. "Nowadays, many of them no longer add sugar when they drink it."

This growing appreciation is also evident in the culinary world. At last year's Michelin Guide awards in Beijing, Ji Na, a tea sommelier at Lu Shang Lu, became the first tea pro-

fessional in the Guide's history to receive an award.

Ji began her work more than four years ago, learning through trial and error. Inspired by Western sommeliers, she offers warm and professional tea services, introducing guests to the stories and traditions of Chinese tea.

"When I received the award, I realized it was a recognition of the profound cultural heritage behind

Chinese tea. It also affirmed that interpreting the 'drink' in food and beverages is a uniquely Chinese approach," she says. "I deeply felt what cultural confidence truly means."

"Tea is about more than taste or mouthfeel," she adds. "It is diverse and inclusive. I hope we continue to use tea as a medium for connection."

Even as tea goes global, its cultur-



Iranian twin brothers pour hearts into home country's hot beverage

By **LI YINGXUE**

At a tea culture event held on Saturday at Beijing Foreign Studies University under the theme "Brewing Cultures, Bridging Boundaries," visitors sampled a variety of specialty teas from across China, such as *Zhengshan Xiaozhong* (Lapsang Souchong) from Fujian province and Pu'er from Yunnan province.

But one booth stood out for its distinctive presentation — a traditional metal samovar, used to heat water, with a ceramic teapot resting on top and small glass cups for serving, an iconic Iranian setup for brewing and serving tea.

Equally striking were the hosts behind the booth: a pair of identical, Iranian twins who smiled warmly and poured tea for the guests.

The 50-year-old brothers, Majid Shamaeizadeh and Massoud Shamaeizadeh, are Iranian artists who served their country's signature black tea, inviting visitors to enjoy it



Iranian twin artists Majid Shamaeizadeh and Massoud Shamaeizadeh bring their stories and brews to enlighten the tea cultural events at BFSU on Saturday. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

alongside a splash of Iran's saffron water for added fragrance and color. "Iranians often enhance their black tea with spices like cinnamon,

rose petals or dried orange peel," says Massoud Shamaeizadeh. "We might also pair it with pistachio candy or traditional sweets."

He explains that the typical way to enjoy tea in Iran is to place a small piece of sugar or dessert in the mouth, then sip the hot beverage slowly, allowing the sweetness and aroma to unfold together. "It's a delicate balance of flavor, where sweetness meets the tea's richness."

Though tea arrived relatively late in Iran, the younger brother notes that it quickly took root. "Iranian black tea was introduced about 200 years ago by the royal family, who brought it from India and encouraged cultivation in Iran's northern regions, which have the right climate," he says. "Before that, coffee was more common, but tea quickly replaced it to become the nation's favorite drink."

Interestingly, despite their name, many "coffeehouses" in Iran serve mostly tea. "They're social hubs," he says. "People gather to talk, sing, or listen to stories."

Tea also plays a symbolic role in Iran's marriage traditions. In the

past, matchmaking was typically arranged by families, with little direct contact between the bride and groom before engagement. During the introduction ceremony, the groom's family would visit the bride's home for a formal meeting.

"At one point, the bride's father would call out, 'Daughter, bring the tea!'" Massoud Shamaeizadeh says. "This was often the first time the groom saw the bride up close. She would come in carrying a tray of tea, serving each guest in turn."

"That moment of delivering tea to the guests was a meaningful and emotional introduction between the couple. Years later, many still remember it vividly," he says.

The brothers arrived in China in 2008 to pursue Ph.Ds in design at Tsinghua University. "Our research focused on national branding and how design can enhance a country's image," Majid Shamaeizadeh recalls.

After graduating, they decided to

al meanings vary. Professor He Mingxing of Beijing Foreign Studies University observes that Chinese tea culture has spread across East and Southeast Asia through literature and trade, such as *The Classic of Tea* by Tang Dynasty (618-907) scholar Lu Yu, while its introduction to the West came via missionaries, explorers and merchants.

"Today, a British and Chinese person might share tea or coffee, which reflects the blending of civilizations," he says. "But our emotional ties to these drinks differ due to our cultural DNA."

He stresses that International Tea Day is a reminder of what makes these shared moments special. "The very act of sitting together over tea is a hard-won opportunity," he says. "It reminds us of the importance of a shared future for humanity."

The story of Chinese tea's global journey is also one of commerce and cultural curiosity. In 1975, China's Xiaguan Tea Factory developed an artificial fermentation method, producing the now-famous 100-gram "Yunnan Tuocha".

A year later, Frenchman Fred Kempler discovered the tea in a Hong Kong shop. Drawn by its unique flavor, he visited Yunnan, bought nearly two tons, and became its exclusive distributor in Europe, earning it the nickname "Xiao Fa Tu", or "the tuocha sold to France".

Since 1986, Yunnan's Pu'er *tuocha* has won multiple awards at food expos in France, the United States, and other countries, earning global recognition for Pu'er.

Xu Xue, executive dean of the Academy of Certified Chinese Tea Master, says the Dayi brand, renowned for its Pu'er, has long focused on international expansion and cultural exchange.

"Since 2011, we've established channels in countries like South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand," he says. "We've published multilingual tea books and hosted global exchange events and writing camps."

"We hope to pass down this thousand-year-old culture through a single cup of tea, and to connect with the world," he says.

White tea is another rising star in China's cultural exports. Historically part of the Maritime Silk Road trade, it has long appeared in Southeast Asian and European markets.

"Queen Victoria enjoyed *baihao yinzen* (silver needle) at afternoon tea. In Malaysia, *shoumei* is still a fixture on morning tea menus. Fortnum & Mason in the UK continues to sell silver needle tea," says Zhang Yuxin, assistant to the chairman of Fujian Pinpin Tea Co.

"According to the China Tea Marketing Association, white tea has been the fastest-growing category among the six major tea types for the past decade," Zhang says. "I believe that now and in the near future, white tea will become one of China's cultural symbols on the world stage."

From ancient trade caravans to modern-day Michelin kitchens, from Istanbul teahouses to Australian outback firesides, tea has become more than a drink. It is a shared language of tradition, trust, and cultural exchange.

Sigley says: "Whether you come from China, Australia, or anywhere else in the world, the moment you hold a warm cup of tea, we share a small yet profound 'Earth moment!'"

Contact the writer at liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn

LIFE



From left: Peking Opera doyen Yang Shaochun (right), 85, backstage with his students; a scene from *Xi Fushan* featuring 25-year-old Peking Opera actor Xu Zhouyi (front) in the leading role; Wei Pengyu (left) in the middle of dressing for his role in *Xi Fushan*. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

A new Peking Opera generation takes the stage

Under a master's guidance, performers show they are worthy inheritors of ancient craft, **Chen Nan** reports.

The backstage was busy and noisy. Young male Peking Opera performers in their 20s were applying make-up, adjusting costumes, stretching, and clearing their throats. The air was filled with the smell of greasepaint and the sound of traditional Chinese instruments warming up.

Around 6 pm, an hour before the show began, 85-year-old Peking Opera master Yang Shaochun stepped through the side entrance. A few students didn't notice him at first, but once someone spotted him, the energy in the room shifted.

The young performers quickly paused whatever they were doing. Some stood up immediately, bowing slightly in respect. Several hurried over to greet him.

Yang smiled and gave a nod. He didn't speak much at first. Instead, he slowly walked around the room, observing quietly. He helped the young performers adjust their costumes and offered small but precise corrections — how to position the headdress, how to comb the long beard.

"These young people started learning with me when they were just kids — now they're adults, leading the shows themselves," Yang says.

China National Peking Opera Company, one of China's top performing arts troupes dedicated to preserving and promoting Peking Opera, on Friday launched the fifth edition of its *wuxi* showcase — a performance series highlighting the martial, or action-driven, segments of traditional Chinese opera. These scenes emphasize combat, acrobatics and physical storytelling.

From last Friday to this Saturday, four performances featuring young artists focused on *wuxi* will be staged at Beijing People's Theatre — the first theater built specifically for Peking Opera, which opened in 1954, five years after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The program presents a rich selection of classic Peking Opera works, including *San Cha Kou* (At the Crossroads), *Lin Chong Ye Ben* (Lin Chong Flees by Night), and *Xi Fushan* (The Battle of Fushan). Together, these selections offer audiences a



Peking Opera actor Wu Zeyu (middle) plays the role of Liu Lihua, an inn owner, in the classic production *San Cha Kou*. Staged in Beijing on Friday, the performance showcases the beauty of martial arts in Peking Opera.

full dose of action-packed, physically intense Peking Opera.

Peking Opera, or *jingju*, is a 200-year-old art form that combines singing, dancing, acrobatics and martial arts. In 2010, it was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"*Wuxi*, or martial play, is the cornerstone of the fighting and movement aspect in Peking Opera. It blends traditional Chinese martial arts, stylized combat and choreography with music and rhythm," says Wang Yong, president of the China National Peking Opera Company, speaking at Beijing People's Theatre on Friday.

"*Wuxi* is not only a signature element of Peking Opera but also a cul-

tural treasure — fusing martial discipline with theatrical storytelling. It's a living expression of China's martial and artistic heritage, performed onstage with style, grace and physical mastery," he adds.

In 2022, the China National Peking Opera Company launched the *wuxi* showcase project as a way to cultivate new talent and introduce a new generation of young performers to the public.

"*Wuxi* scenes are often the highlight of any Peking Opera performance. Even people unfamiliar with the story are drawn to the spectacle, intensity and martial arts movement," says 29-year-old actor Wei Pengyu, who joined the company in 2018.

During the Friday performance, Wei appeared in an excerpt from *The*

Battle of Fushan, which tells the story of two brave scouts — He Tianbao and his disciple Lu Zhiyi — on a dangerous mission to infiltrate Fushan Mountain, a lawless stronghold taken over by two bandit chiefs.

"It's a story about heroic sacrifice, which is common in Peking Opera's martial art plays," says Wei, who plays Lu Zhiyi, the younger scout killed during the mission.

Born in Yuncheng, Shanxi province, Wei was drawn to Peking Opera as a child — not by the music or stories at first, but by the colorful, striking facial masks that brought the characters to life. At 14, he moved to Beijing to attend an arts school, where he began formal training in Peking Opera, specializing in *wusheng* — a male role type

focused on martial arts and physical performance.

"For me, stepping into the role of a hero or a warrior isn't just stagecraft — it's a dream come true. The armor, the weapons, the power — it's everything I imagined as a kid, now made real through sweat and discipline," he says.

Xu Zhouyi, 25, plays He Tianbao, who, despite his bravery and strength, is ultimately overwhelmed and killed in the darkness of the mountain.

"What amazed me most is that playing *wuxi* isn't just about action — it's about expressing moral character, justice, loyalty, courage and inner strength through movement," says Xu.

"The character is armed with

double swords, a long beard, thick platform shoes — and the role constantly challenges me with demanding one-legged poses. I have to focus on every step and match each movement to the beat of the percussion," he explains.

Later that evening, an excerpt of the classic piece *San Cha Kou* was performed by two young actors, Wu Zeyu and Shu Jiaying.

Wu played Liu Lihua, an innkeeper, and Shu played Ren Tanghui, a warrior escorting general Jiao Zan, who has been framed and is on his way to exile. In the iconic "blind fight" scene, Liu and Ren engage in a fierce fight in complete darkness — unaware they are actually on the same side.

The audience cheered as the actors tumbled, rolled, faked punches, and performed somersaults with impeccable precision. The entire fight was choreographed to appear accidental — as if both men were moving by instinct alone. Every near-miss was perfectly timed, blending tension, humor, martial skill and rhythm. There was no dialogue, no melody — only breath, body movements and percussion beats. It showcases a unique and essential aspect of the beauty of Peking Opera — precision, physical storytelling, and stylized rhythm — all core components of *wuxi*.

"At first, I didn't fully understand the character — maybe because I was still young," said 25-year-old Wu. "Then my teacher, Liu Xizhong, stood in front of me, silently mouthing the rhythm, counting the beats. He told me when to slow down, when not to force it. That's when I started to feel the role, not just perform it."

Wu and Shu rehearsed together for nearly a year.

"*San Cha Kou* is a test of trust between two actors. We have to read each other's energy — know when one is speeding up or slowing down. Every movement — flips, dodges, weapon swings — must be perfectly timed to avoid real collisions while still looking dangerous," says Wu.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

New York event celebrates life of modern Chinese philosophy giant

By MINGMEI LI in New York
mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

The English-language debut of Feng Qi's works in New York marked a new step in bringing Chinese philosophy into the global academic dialogue.

International scholars from China and the United States gathered at the China Institute on Wednesday for a symposium and book launch event titled "The Light of Wisdom Across Borders", marking the 110th anniversary of the birth of Chinese philosophical giant Professor Feng Qi (1915-95).

Feng, regarded as a towering figure in contemporary Chinese philosophy, is renowned for his "Wisdom Theory" and studies of Chinese philosophical history. His lifelong pursuit of "transforming knowledge into wisdom" led to the development of a "broad epistemology" that integrates Marxist, Chinese and Western philosophical traditions in the quest for the values of truth, goodness and beauty.

His "Wisdom Trilogy" and two

monumental works on philosophical history have injected original vitality into Chinese philosophy and also offered profound insights into global philosophy. Over the past two decades, Feng's philosophy has sparked global interest, with numerous monographs and more than 500 multilingual articles devoted to his work.

The release of these English translations marks a significant step in bringing Feng's thoughts to a broader international audience, said Wu Jian, vice-president of East China Normal University.

Wu also highlighted Feng's foundational role in establishing the university's philosophy department and his pioneering contributions to modern Chinese philosophy. He emphasized its continued commitment to "sustaining" academic exchange and dialogue with the international community.

Wu added that faculty and scholars at ECNU have been dedicated to compiling, editing and revising Feng's works. Through initial translations and close collaboration with former American doctoral students



Wu Jian (left), vice-president of East China Normal University, presents a copy of the English translation of Feng Qi's work to Yu Yougen, education counselor at the Chinese Consulate General in New York, at the China Institute on Wednesday. MINGMEI LI / CHINA DAILY

at ECNU, they have worked to present Chinese philosophical texts to international audiences with clarity, accuracy and cultural nuance.

"This will help bring Chinese phi-

losophy to a wider international readership and encourage more meaningful academic exchange across philosophical traditions," he said.

"This is one of the most enjoyable pieces I've ever translated," said Chad Meyers, the translator of Feng's work and a former student at ECNU. He noted that while translation can be challenging, he found the process rewarding and has translated more than 20 books to date.

George Geh, CEO of the China Institute, said the event was not only a tribute to Feng's intellectual legacy but also an opportunity to promote deeper philosophical dialogue between the East and the West.

"Feng Qi's philosophy shows the forward-looking potential of cross-cultural conversations," he said. Yu Yougen, education counselor at the Chinese Consulate General in New York, said the symposium is a valuable platform for US-China academic and cultural exchanges.

"Feng's work also reflects a shared need for philosophical engagement amid global challenges," Yu said. The English editions of Feng's works, co-translated by Chinese and American scholars, are expected to open new channels for international

engagement with Chinese philosophy and further energize the academic dialogue between higher education institutions and academia.

"Feng's philosophy, rooted in Chinese tradition, offers a distinctive voice in contemporary philosophical discourse," said Tong Shijun, chancellor of NYU Shanghai and professor of philosophy at ECNU.

"His theory of wisdom contributes to ongoing conversations about knowledge, ethics and human values," Tong said.

Participants from ECNU, the University of California, Riverside, and Loyola Marymount University also discussed the cross-cultural relevance of Feng's philosophical ideas, as they examined how his "Wisdom Theory" can contribute to contemporary discussions in areas such as artificial intelligence, ethics and ecological philosophy.

"The symposium provided an opportunity to further understand Feng's work and to consider possible directions for future philosophical exchange between China and the West," Tong said.



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China vows to counter US curbs on AI chips

By WANG KEJU and MA SI

As Washington seeks to globally restrict the use of Chinese advanced computing chips, Beijing is drawing a clear legal line by saying that any entity that enforces or enables the United States' restrictions could be in violation of China's Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law.

While the US curbs might put short-term pressure on Chinese enterprises, analysts and executives believe that the restrictions will only prove to be a failure and ultimately catalyze the development of China's home-grown software and hardware ecosystems.

China condemned on Wednesday new US warnings on the use of artificial intelligence chips by Chinese tech giant Huawei, vowing it would take steps against such "typical unilateral bullying and protectionism" by the US to restrict other countries' access to advanced computing chips and artificial intelligence, according to a statement by the Ministry of Commerce.

"The US should immediately rectify its erroneous practices, comply with international economic and trade rules, and respect other nations' rights to technological development," said a spokesperson for the ministry.

The spokesperson stressed that "any organization or individual that enforces or assists in enforcing such measures will risk violating Chinese laws and regulations, including the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, and shall bear corresponding legal liabilities."

Washington unveiled fresh guidelines last week, warning companies that the use of Chinese-made advanced AI semiconductors, specifically tech giant Huawei's Ascend chips, would put them at risk of violating US export controls.

The US Commerce Department said its policy was aimed at sharing its AI technology "with trusted foreign countries around the world, while keeping the technology out of the hands of our adversaries."

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said on Wednesday that "all in all, the export control was a failure."

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Tourists visit the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province, on Tuesday. With the onset of the early summer peak tourism season, the UNESCO World Heritage site is attracting a large number of visitors eager to explore the ancient Buddhist carvings. HAO YUAN / XINHUA

Xi stresses heritage protection

Digital technology helps to preserve historical legacy at Longmen Grottoes

By MO JINGXI in Beijing and SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou

When President Xi Jinping ascended the steps to Guyang Cave, the oldest cave at the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province, on Monday afternoon, Gu Hongyao and his colleagues from the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute were documenting the site.

Gu is responsible for archaeological surveying, which requires him to document every detail within the cave, to ensure its better protection.

President Xi was very concerned about the instability of rock formations in stone cultural relics and made detailed inquiries on issues such as water infiltration, weathering and microbial damage, according to Gu and his colleagues.

"He asked us to protect, inherit and promote these treasures of Chinese culture. I believe that the reason these cliffside treasures are so precious is not only because they carry a long-standing cultural legacy, but also because they are a testament to the craftsmanship and spirit of the artisans," Gu said.

When Gu joined the institute 20 years ago, the work was time-consuming and labor-intensive because the archaeologists could only rely on their own hands, a pen and a piece of paper.

Nowadays, the work efficiency of surveying has been greatly



A staff member works on restoring a Buddha's head from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) at the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute in Luoyang, Henan province, on Tuesday. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

enhanced as 3D digital technologies can help produce the preliminary drawings. In addition, 3D printing is used to create eaves for the niches to prevent rainwater from directly eroding the statues, and ground-penetrating radar detection is used to accurately locate cracks and water seepage.

"We are trying every means to preserve the legacy of Chinese civilization for as long as possible," he said.

First built in AD 493, the Longmen Grottoes comprise more than 2,300 caves and niches carved into the steep limestone cliffs over a 1-kilometer-long stretch. Standing as a testament to the artistic and cultural zenith of ancient China, the site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000.

Ma Chaolong, who joined the

Shanxi province; and the Majijishan Grottoes in Tianshui, Gansu.

Yu said he told Xi that the stone carvings from Guyang Cave provide invaluable historical materials for the study of Buddhist architecture and carving art, as well as music, dance, clothing and cultural exchanges in ancient times.

After inspecting the overall layout and appearance of the grottoes, as well as the representative niches and statues, Xi emphasized the need to protect, inherit and promote the country's cultural treasures.

According to Yu, the preservation of cultural heritage has entered a new era, shifting from rescue-based protection to preventive protection.

It is essential now to leverage the power of technology and incorporate new materials and techniques into the preservation of cultural heritage in order to make it more precise and effective, Yu said.

China's vast landscape is home to nearly 6,000 cave temples, and Xi said that the nation's major grottoes are "treasures of Chinese civilization" with significant historical and cultural value.

Since 2012, Xi has visited multiple provincial-level regions rich in cultural heritage for inspections, issued more than 170 important directives on cultural relics, archaeology and intangible cultural heritage, and conducted on-site investigations of over 100 historical and cultural heritage sites. He has paid visits to all of China's four major grotto sites.

The other three are the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu province; the Yungang Grottoes in Datong,

Deadly strike



Palestinians grieve on Tuesday after an Israeli airstrike on a school that shelters displaced people in Gaza City. At least 64 Palestinians were killed in Tuesday's attacks across Gaza. MAHMOUD ZAKI / XINHUA

BAND OF BROTHERS BATTLES SOLITUDE, WIND AND SUN TO TRANSFORM DESERT

Dedicated rangers in remote Gansu reserve work hard to revive ecology

By ZHAO XU in Dunhuang, Gansu zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn



Every year between October and November, the poplar forests in the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province, come alive in a blaze of vibrant, shimmering yellow. Golden shafts of sunlight pour into the cave dwelling of ranger Lu Shengrong, when the door swings open during the day.

Outside, the desert stretches end-

lessly, its sands tinged darker shade by mineral-rich gravel — iron and manganese oxides — weathered by wind and sun over the years.

"These are the forces that have shaped both the land and the lives within it, including mine," said Lu.

For the past four years, the cave standing in the reserve's north-

western reaches has served as both his workplace and home. It was carved from a towering, wall-like landform which has been shaped by the relentless sculpting force of the desert wind.

Known as Yardang, or Yadang, these striking formations are a geological hallmark of Dunhuang — an ancient oasis town and important stop along the Silk Road, which once linked China to Central Asia and beyond.

See **Dunhuang**, page 2

WORLD WATCH By James Shikwati

President's remarks at forum align with Global South hopes

President Xi Jinping's address at the opening ceremony of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum on May 13 went well beyond its intended audience. It struck a chord across the Global South, which sees China as a dependable partner and whose messaging reflects their own aspirations for multilateralism, global justice and a world order not dominated by a single hegemonic power.

In a world currently fractured by geopolitical tensions, vulnerability and uncertainty occasioned by the United States' tariff moves, Xi's appeal for solidarity and a shared future carried a message of hope for unity and the reform of the global governance architecture. The call for a reformed global governance system that treats developing nations as equal stakeholders, rather than peripheral players, reflects the long-standing frustrations of Africa and Asia, besides Latin America and the Caribbean. For many in the Global South, the current global governance system is stuck in colonial biases and narratives.

The Global South's grievances are not new, and China is offering a moral and more reliable model for governance. The post-World War II order was not made with the Global South in mind, but for victorious Western powers. Xi's speech emphasized the need to focus on concrete outcomes as outlined in the example of a model for high-tech South-South cooperation in the China-CELAC satellite cooperation program. The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative is also a template for building partnerships based on infrastructure, trade and shared development goals that facilitate the possibility for a reimagined international order.

Xi's words were an invitation to build a new world order that is more equitable, inclusive and free from coercion — a world of true friendship. In his address, Xi quoted an 11th-century Chinese poet, who said, "Life's greatest joy comes from finding kindred spirits"; and he also mentioned a Latin American proverb that says, "The one who has a friend has a treasure."

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PAGE TWO

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Endangered Przewalski's horses are seen in the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Migrating waterbirds use the reserve's wetlands as stopovers. SUN ZHICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Dunhuang: A triumph of desert survival, renewal



Poplar trees bring vibrancy to the desert at the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

From page 1

The opening of that great land route in the 2nd century BC sparked waves of migration and land reclamation that ebbed and flowed for two millennia. Though the desert was always present, the 18th century saw its rapid expansion. Wetlands vanished as migration and overcultivation depleted water resources, allowing the desert's creeping advance.

"What we have done to nature, we must now make right," Lu said, pointing out that Xihu, or West Lake, serves as a reminder of a time when water-rich landscapes stretched across the vast region west of Dunhuang.

"Today, within our 6,600-square-kilometer reserve, approximately 970 sq km are wetlands. This is why the reserve is considered the last natural barrier against the encroaching desert — safeguarding not only the surrounding ecosystem, but also the world-renowned Mogao Grottoes, located about 145 km to the east," he said.

Harsh realities

The reserve was founded in 1993, and Lu became a ranger there in 2011 at age 28.

He said his first task was making the "straw checkerboard." This simple yet remarkably effective Chinese method of sand stabilization involves drying wheat or rice straw and inserting it vertically into the sand to a depth of 15 centimeters, leaving 20 to 25 cm exposed. The grid consists of 1-by-1-meter squares.

The checkerboard traps sand and also captures rainfall. The decaying straw releases nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, enriching the soil and fostering plant growth.

Lu recalls waking up early every day to work on the straw checkerboards, continuing until noon when the temperature sometimes soared to 40 C.

"Back then, my workstation — the reserve has four stations in total — was located at the western edge of Er Dun village, a settlement encircled by the desolate Gobi and aptly known as 'the first village of the desert,' a name that carries an unmistakable sense of harshness," he said.

Lu said his bungalow was located in the path of the wind. "To wake up with sand in my mouth — there was simply no way to keep it out, even with the doors and windows tightly shut," he said.

"Every spring, after a winter of howling gales, sand was piled half-way up our bungalow. The trenches we'd dug for planting trees were bur-

ied, and it took half a month to clear them. Without that, water — more precious than most things here — would simply run off instead of nourishing the roots."

In 2021, Lu arrived at his current post — Tuliangdao Station — on the northwestern edge of the reserve, which directly faces the forbidding Kumtag, or Kumutage, Desert to its west.

Known for its extreme aridity, massive sand dunes, and proximity to human settlements, Kumtag Desert is a typical shifting-sand desert. Its steady encroachment is believed to have contributed to the disappearance of some major lakes and wetlands that were once part of the West Lake region.

"Nowadays, the entire nature reserve is closed off to human activity," said Lu.

One of the main responsibilities he and his four colleagues share is to monitor anyone attempting to enter the area, whether travelers venturing off the beaten path, poachers, or illegal loggers targeting Euphrates, or desert poplars.

The trees have an extraordinary ability to survive in arid climates as well as exceptional tolerance for saline-alkaline soils found in the region. The reserve contains the largest and most concentrated Euphrates poplar forest in the region.

Lu said a close eye is also being kept on endangered wildlife, most notably wild camels and Przewalski's horses, which are under Class 1 protection.

"Wild camels can be quite aggressive," said Lu, recalling the time he leaped over a tall fence to escape one hot on his heels. "But what truly frightens us are the ticks — they cause unbearable itching, often high fevers, and are nearly impossible to avoid during our field surveys."

He winces at the memory of swarms of ticks crawling over the fur of a dead camel he once had to retrieve for taxidermy.

Between June and September, about 120 wild camels migrate to the Xihu from neighboring reserves in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said Wu Xingdong, director of another research station.

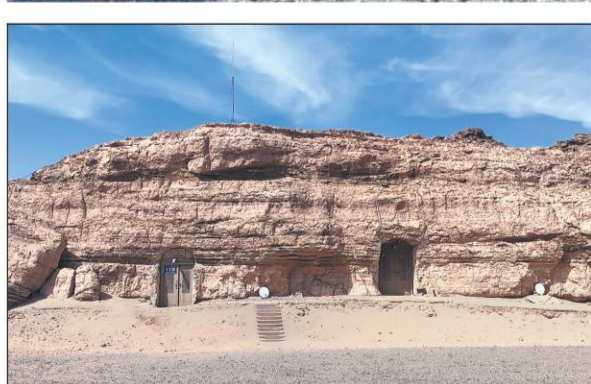
He said none of the research stations operate in isolation.

"The well-being of our reserve is both affected by and contributes to the health of other nature reserves across the broader region," Wu said.

"We've installed 32 monitoring towers and 14 automatic drinking stations across the reserve to track the 166 horses living here and ensure they have water during the dry sea-



Left: Wu Xingdong (left) and his team add water to a hydrometeorological station. Right: Lu Shengrong (middle) and his fellow workers monitor waterbirds in the reserve. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Top: A wild camel walks at the reserve. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Above: The reserve's Tuliangdao Station is housed inside the caves carved into the rock. SUN ZHICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

son. In winter, we also break the ice so they can drink."

Occasionally, a ranger intervenes to rescue a colt from an adult male that is attempting to eliminate a potential threat.

Several zoos and breeding programs in the West preserved a small population, and reintroduction efforts began in the 1990s in a few natural parks and reserves in Mongolia and northwestern China, among them the Xihu Reserve.

Lonesome ranger

Of the four stations, two, including Wu's, are not connected to the electricity grid, and rely on photovoltaic power generation. Stored energy, however, is not always enough and the stations sometimes experience cold temperatures during periods without sunlight.

Despite such hardships, nothing compares to the profound loneliness of life on the reserve — a desolate place where the whispering of the wind is endless. That companionship of fellow rangers is appreciated and crucial to maintaining mental equilibrium in the harsh environment.

Lu Shengrong, 42, found camaraderie in Tian Shoujun, who is 11 years his senior and began working at Tuliangdao Station in 2017. "I had been a driver before I came here. The truck for our field surveys was no problem until it got stuck in the sand. Then you had to get it out yourself," Tian said with a laugh.

"But there were new things to learn, like filling out field reports and cooking, which I never had to do before when I lived with my family. Here, we take turns cooking."

As he speaks, he confidently stretches strands of hand-pulled noodles, a local specialty. The tiny kitchen where Tian honed his culinary skills — like most indoor spaces at Tuliangdao Station — was carved directly out of the rugged Yardang formations. "We have four cave dwellings. Each one is about 45 sq m and takes around a month and a half to complete," he said.

The landforms, which were once part of the seafloor, are distinctly stratified with layers of hard and soft sedimentary rock.

"The harder layers, like sandstone and limestone, are especially tough to drill through," explained Lu.

"Builders bore at an angle from top to bottom, pour water down the shaft to soften the rock overnight, and resume drilling the next day, sometimes with the help of explosives."

Even a pet dog is given his own Yardang cave — a cool, shaded burrow for escaping the relentless sun.

The caves typically have no windows, as they have no need of wind, and are lit by electric lights from morning to night. Only when the door opens does a sliver of the outside world slip in, with light flooding

the dwelling like water through a crack in a stone.

Flowing with life

Less than 100 kilometers to the west of the station lies the infamous Lop Nur, a former salt lake, where biochemist and explorer Peng Jiamu went missing in 1980 — a disappearance that cast the region into the Chinese imagination as a land of mystery, desolation, and drought.

"Not many know that Lop Nur was once part of a salt lake system, fed by the Tarim River from the west and the Shule River from the east," said Lu.

Lop Nur began to rapidly vanish in the mid-20th century, succumbing completely to desertification by the late 1970s. Yet the Tarim and Shule rivers, both lifelines for desert oasis towns and the ancient Silk Road, were not entirely lost. In recent years, significant conservation efforts have markedly improved the situation.

"Dunhuang city, including our nature reserve, lies at the lower reaches of the Shule River. For years, upstream water was so scarce it couldn't even meet farming needs, let alone flow downstream," said Lu. "But that was no longer the case after 2017."

Thanks to renewed water flow, vegetation and wildlife in the area have rebounded. Long-lost bodies of water and reed marshes are reemerging. Migrating waterbirds, now more diverse and numerous, are once again using the wetlands as vital stopovers on their long journeys.

To Lu's greatest relief, the sand dunes now halt wherever grasses take root or wetlands form. "It assures me that what we've endured hasn't been in vain," he said, admitting there were times when nature's reluctance to show signs of recovery had tested his patience.

That patience remains essential. Despite signs of improvement, conditions are still severe in a place where the annual rainfall is less than 20 millimeters.

"The wind is at its most ferocious in April and May," said Lu, who has grown used to sleeping through its unceasing howl. By day, sandstorms churn the earth and sky into a blinding white blur, as if the world has been swallowed by dust.

Contemplating the name "Devil City," a title born from the eerie whistle of wind threading through the jagged Yardang formations, Tian said: "From the reserve's edge, it feels unimaginable. But as you journey deeper, the desert begins to soften. Grassy lakes appear, and golden poplars jolt eyes long dulled by the seemingly unbreakable monotony of sand. It makes you marvel at the fierce yet quiet persistence of life."

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TOP NEWS

Exchanges go on for healthy China-US ties

Interactions set to build trust, help eliminate misunderstandings, senior official says

By ZHAO JIA
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

A series of engagements between China and the United States at various levels took place in Beijing this week, underscoring the importance of constructive dialogues in fostering a stable and healthy bilateral relationship.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi met on Tuesday with Kyung-wha Kang, president of the New York City-based Asia Society, and expressed the hope that the institution will continue to act as a bridge to enhance the correct understanding of China among people in the US.

Wang said that progress has been made recently in the China-US high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs, which once again proves that equal dialogue, mutual respect and proper handling of each other's legitimate concerns serve the common interests of both China and the US.

He emphasized that China's policy toward the US remains "consistent and stable", and reaffirmed China's commitment to true multilateralism and open regionalism.

Noting that the Asia-Pacific region is where the common interests of China and the US converge as well as a focal area for their contradictions and differences, Wang said the two countries should first achieve positive interactions in the region, thereby establishing a correct way to get along with each other and finding effective channels for win-win cooperation.

Kang said the Asia Society has a deep understanding of China's millennia-old cultural heritage and is willing to continue sharing fact-based and objective views on China. The institution will work with more insightful people in the US to build platforms for dialogue to dispel misunderstandings and promote mutual understanding, she added.

Also on Tuesday, Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu held a meeting with David Perdue, the newly appointed US ambassador to China, who arrived in Beijing last week, just days after the world's two largest economies agreed to ease trade tensions.

During their talks, Ma emphasized that China approaches its relationship with the US based on the three principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, while firmly safeguarding its own sovereignty, security and development interests.

He voiced the hope that Washington will work with Beijing in the same direction to promote the steady, sound and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

Earlier this week, the initiative to host 50,000 US students for exchange programs in China over a period of five years also

“Engagement between Chinese officials at different levels with various representatives from the US demonstrates China's strong desire to achieve positive and effective interactions with all sectors of American society.”

Diao Daming, professor at Renmin University of China

made some progress.

On Monday, Liu Jianchao, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, received a student delegation from the Max Baucus Institute of the University of Montana. The group, led by former US ambassador to China Max Baucus, is in China for a four-week academic exchange program.

“Despite the challenges facing China-US relations, the friendship between our peoples has remained strong,” Liu said, emphasizing the vital role of young people in the future of bilateral ties and encouraging them to contribute actively to the relationship.

Baucus stressed that close cooperation and joint efforts are the only viable path forward, and pledged to continue contributing to the deepening of bilateral exchanges.

On Tuesday, another student delegation from the University of Pennsylvania exchanged views with an official from the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs.

“Engagement between Chinese officials at different levels with various representatives from the US demonstrates China's strong desire to achieve positive and effective interactions with all sectors of American society, especially young people, and to ensure smooth channels of communication,” said Diao Daming, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies.

The interactions are expected to help the US people have objective insights about China, in order to eliminate misunderstandings, Diao said.

“At the same time, China is signaling its expectation that the US will act in the shared interest of both nations and make meaningful adjustments to help create favorable conditions for improving bilateral relations,” he added.

Cuteness overload



Two brown bear cubs rescued from a cave are given fruit at the Tarsus Nature Park on Saturday in Mersin, Turkey. A special area will be created in the park for the bears.

MUSTAFA UNAL UYSAL / GETTY IMAGES

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Amani Altartir, wife of the Jordanian ambassador to China, takes part in an event on the occasion of International Tea Day on Wednesday, in Beijing. The wives of ambassadors from over 10 countries participated in the event. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

African countries praise nation's modernization efforts

By SONG PING and LI YINGQING

In an era where traditional development models are being increasingly questioned, the concept of modernization is being redefined across the Global South. At the 14th Meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum held on Tuesday in Kunming, Yunnan province, about 100 representatives from China and more than 50 African countries convened to explore how China's modernization experience — characterized by poverty alleviation, grassroots governance, and adaptive policy experimentation — can inspire Africa's own development pathways.

Themed “China-Africa Governance Experience Exchanges and Chinese Modernization”, the forum was hosted by the Secretariat of the Chinese Follow-up Committee of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and co-organized by the China-Africa Institute and the Secretariat of the National Top Think Tank of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

“Modernization is a complex journey, unique to each nation's historical, cultural, and socio-economic context. But beneath those differences lies a universal aspiration: to improve lives, eradicate poverty, and build resilient societies,” said Elia G. Kaiyamo, ambassador of Namibia to China.

He emphasized that China's remarkable transformation over the past four decades offers invaluable

“China stands firmly with its African brothers, supporting their modernization and capacity building for self-driven development.”

Zhao Yong, official at the Department of African Affairs, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

lessons for African countries, demonstrating that modernization is not merely about rapid economic growth but also about fostering social equity, institutional reform, and good governance.

Zhao Yong, an official at the Department of African Affairs in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the unique bond between China and Africa. “China stands firmly with its African brothers, supporting their modernization and capacity building for self-driven development,” he said. Marking the 25th anniversary of the FOCAC, he noted that the mechanism has driven leapfrog growth in China-Africa relations, closely aligning the “Chinese Dream” and its development goals with African Union's Agenda 2063.

From a geopolitical perspective, Ye Hailin, executive president of

the China-Africa Institute, said that the rise of developing countries is “an irreversible trend”. However, he noted that some Western nations still cling to the Cold War mentality and power politics, further exacerbating global deficits in peace, development, security, and governance. He added that China's development path has inspired African countries to solve local challenges with local solutions.

With years of experience living, studying, and teaching in China since 2005, Hodan Osman Abdi, Somalia's ambassador to China, shared personal reflections on the country's development. She noted that Chinese modernization should not be reduced to GDP growth or infrastructure expansion. “It is about the synchronization of material advancement with cultural confidence, social equity, and environmental protection. It is about lifting lives, not just statistics,” she said.

She noted that the partnership between China and Somalia has deep historical roots and is deeply embedded in the hearts of the Somali people. “In the memories of my generation, there is one image that is constant: hard-working Chinese engineers and workers, silently and diligently constructing roads, bridges, and hospitals.” In Somalia, the only highway connecting northern and southern Somalia was built by China, and over 80 major infrastructure projects have been carried out with Chinese support. She also highlighted hybrid rice techniques

that have brought her country closer to food security.

Phindile Mkwanazi, deputy director-general of the National School of Government of South Africa, recognized China's pragmatic and experimental policy style. For African countries, she emphasized, the goal should be “not to copy, but to build institutions that work in our context, for our people”.

Echoing that view, Ethiopian scholar Abdetu Dribssa Beyene, executive director of the Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation in Ethiopia, called for development strategies rooted in mutual learning and local ownership. He cited China's targeted poverty alleviation — lifting over 800 million people out of extreme poverty — as a governance model worthy of close study.

Omar Mjenga, president of the Centre for International Policy in Tanzania, pointed out that China's reputation in Africa stems not from rhetoric but from results. “In the minds of many Africans, China means roads, jobs, and improved livelihoods — delivered without conditions attached,” he said.

Following the forum, participants will go on a three-day field visit in Yunnan, to get firsthand insights into China's modernization in action — from rural vitalization and ecological protection to innovation-led growth and grassroots governance.

Contact the writers at
songping@chinadaily.com.cn

Chips: More robust legal framework to safeguard cooperation

From page 1

“The fundamental assumptions that led to the AI diffusion rule in the beginning, in the first place, have been proven to be fundamentally flawed,” Huang added.

Over the past year, Washington's ban on the sale of advanced AI chips to China has compelled tech companies to pivot sharply toward domestic semiconductor designers like Huawei, while also spurring Beijing to invest heavily to develop a supply chain that doesn't rely on manufacturers outside the country.

“The local companies are very, very talented and very determined, and the export control gave them the spirit, the energy and the government support to accelerate their development,” Huang said at the annual Computex event in Taipei.

Nvidia's market share in China, according to Huang, has plunged to 50 percent now from 95 percent at the start of former US president Joe Biden's administration.

Meanwhile, China's local semiconductor suppliers are expected to capture nearly 40 percent of the domestic market share by 2025, almost on a par with foreign-purchased chips, according to market research company TrendForce.

Yang Jie, a senior partner at Shanghai-based Huiye Law Firm, told China Daily that the development of the AI industry requires division of labor and cooperation. However, the recent US restrictions are undoubtedly intended to impede collaboration between Chinese companies, Yang said.

“But this situation is different from when the previous Trump administration sanctioned Huawei,” Yang added. “We now have a more robust legal framework, including the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, to safeguard lawful business cooperation.”

China could also use its unremittable entity list and export controls on rare earth elements to protect its national interests, Yang said.

Contact the writers at
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Relations: Sino-LAC model applicable to intl community

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“We will uphold the multilateral trading system, ensure stable, unimpeded global industrial and supply chains, and promote an environment of openness and cooperation,” Xi said in his speech.

“China and LAC countries champion true multilateralism, uphold international fairness and justice, advance global governance reform, and promote multipolarization of the world and greater democracy in international relations,” he added.

Amid many challenges today, the Global South should increase its level of awareness about how the current global governance system works in order to find solutions. All nations, both large and small, should get an opportunity to have a seat at the table and have a voice in international decision-making for a fair stake in the outcomes.

Xi said that China and LAC countries “stand shoulder to shoulder to support each other”, “ride the tide of progress together to pursue win-win cooperation”, “unite in tough times to conquer challenges

through mutual support” and “uphold solidarity and coordination and rise to global challenges with resolve”. This relationship model is applicable to the global community in addressing the current challenges.

Xi's address summarized the aspirations of the Global South, which hopes for a world of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness, and a world that champions humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.

China's willingness to improve the status quo, together with other Global South countries, offers a breath of fresh air in the international order. Its ability to draw lessons from history to build momentum for the future is remarkable.

The author is a Kenyan economist and founder and director of the Inter-Region Economic Network, a Nairobi-based think tank. He is also the publisher of The African Executive magazine. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Bird care

Electricity workers install surveillance equipment atop an extra-high-voltage tower, which stands at a height of over 70 meters, to monitor the brooding of oriental white storks, in Huoqiu county, Anhui province, on Tuesday. In early May, a family of oriental white storks was found nesting on the tower under construction. The construction company adjusted its work schedule to avoid disturbing the storks and will resume work when the birds leave after the brooding period. ZHENG XIANLIE / FOR CHINA DAILY



GBA officials vow to further development

By ZHENG CAIXIONG and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area should further promote scientific and technological innovation to fulfill its goal of becoming a world-class bay area, senior officials and experts said during a forum that concluded in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Wednesday.

Cities and regions in the Greater Bay Area should pursue breakthroughs as a strategic fulcrum in building a new development pattern, make progress in becoming a demonstration zone for high-quality development and play a leading role in advancing Chinese modernization, said Gao Yu, director of the Counsellors' Office of the State Council, at the two-day 2025 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Forum.

Gao said the GBA has made significant progress in recent years, but now faces both new opportunities and higher demands as it moves into the next stage of development.

He pledged that his office will continue to support the GBA's development by fully leveraging the expertise of its counselors, librarians and special researchers to provide high-quality advice and contribute to the region's high-quality growth in the coming months.

Zhang Shaokang, vice-governor of Guangdong, said the province will take on its key role in constructing the GBA, viewing it as a major opportunity to deepen reform and opening-up while accelerating development.

Guangdong will continue to work with Hong Kong and Macao to improve infrastructure connectivity, align rules and mechanisms, and enhance people-to-people ties across the three regions in pursuit of building a world-class bay area, Zhang said.

Wei Houkai, director of the Rural Development Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, called for deeper integration of the GBA's development with the Belt and Road Initiative. He emphasized the GBA's role as a strategic anchor in the country's new development pattern.

"It is now the right time to build a comprehensive development community in the GBA," he said.

Although Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have different development levels, they are geographically linked and share cultural and familial ties, Wei said. Their complementary strengths in economics, technology and culture lay a solid foundation for joint development, he added.

Ji Min, deputy director of the counsellors' office at the People's Bank of China, said the central bank has introduced several innovative policies to promote financial cooperation within the GBA in recent years.

As of the end of March, cross-border yuan settlement in the GBA had reached 38.5 trillion yuan (\$5.42 trillion). Since the beginning of the year, the proportion of the yuan in total domestic and foreign currency settlements in the GBA has surpassed 70 percent, ranking first nationwide, Ji said.

More than 150 officials, counselors, experts and scholars attended the forum, which was hosted by the Counsellors' Office of the State Council and organized by the counsellors' office of Guangdong province.

The GBA consists of nine cities in Guangdong — Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan, Zhuhai, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Huizhou, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing — along with the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

Contact the writers at zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Briefly

Shenzhou crew set for first spacewalk

The Shenzhou XX mission crew members aboard China's Tian-gong space station are scheduled to carry out their first spacewalk in the coming days, the China Manned Space Agency said on Wednesday. The three orbital travelers — mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong, and crew members Colonel Chen Zhongrui and Colonel Wang Jie — have been aboard the station since their arrival on April 25. They have conducted a host of assignments, including examining and performing maintenance on instruments, installing intravehicular devices, monitoring the space station environment and testing spacewalk suits. The astronauts have also rehearsed medical emergency response efforts and engaged in scientific and technological tasks, the agency said in a news release.

Commercial rocket deploys 6 satellites

CAS Space, a Beijing-based rocket maker owned by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, launched a Kinetica 1 carrier rocket on Wednesday afternoon, successfully placing six satellites in orbit. The Kinetica 1-Y7 rocket lifted off at 12:05 pm from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert and then deployed three remote-sensing satellites — a radar satellite, a mini weather satellite and an experimental satellite — into space, the company said in a news release. These satellites will be used to gather data and images for urban construction planning, environmental monitoring, weather forecast and other civilian purposes. The "Y7" in the designation code means it was the seventh in the rocket series. The launch marked the 31st space mission in China this year.

Former tobacco exec sentenced to 16 years

Ling Chengxing, former head of China's State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, has been sentenced to 16 years in prison for accepting bribes and abusing power. The sentence was handed down on Wednesday by the intermediate people's court of Changchun in Jilin province. Ling was found to have taken advantage of his various posts between 2006 and 2023 to seek benefits for others in matters such as project contracting and business operations, while accepting bribes worth 43.11 million yuan (\$6 million) in return. Moreover, Ling had engaged in favoritism, corruption and abuse of power in the process of facilitating and reviewing matters related to investment and equity acquisition, resulting in a loss of State-owned assets amounting to over 208 million yuan, per the court verdict. Ling was also handed a 4-million yuan fine, while all his illegal gains must be recovered and turned over to the State treasury.

XINHUA-CHINA DAILY

Legal experts review draft ecological code

Symposium held in Beijing to gather intl opinion on comprehensive green laws

By LI SHANGYI
lishangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

China is moving to codify comprehensive environmental laws, a move experts say reflects the nation's commitment to environmental protection and could offer insights for global practices.

Chinese and European legal experts and scholars met in Beijing on Tuesday at the International Symposium on Environmental Code, hosted by the Chinese Society of Environmental and Resources Law, to review a draft of China's environmental and ecological code and share legislative experiences.

Lyu Zhongmei, chairperson of the society, said the symposium aimed to gather international perspectives on the draft code and provide constructive input for the codification process.

The draft code, released online by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on April 30, is open for public comment until June 13. It includes five books and 1,188 clauses. If enacted, it would be China's second formal statutory code.

Lyu noted that China is the first country to integrate both ecological and environmental elements into a single legal code and has drawn on international legislative experience, including publishing foreign environmental codes in Chinese.

Cheryl King-McDowall, chief people and operations officer of ClientEarth, commended China's progress on environmental governance.

"Numerous environmental laws have been enacted, revised and implemented in the country, supported by an increasingly robust enforcement mechanism," she said.

King-McDowall added that China's legal innovations are advanced or even pioneering globally, citing the legally binding concept of ecological civilization and the system of prosecutorial environmental public interest litigation.

"Countries around the world, particularly low- and middle-income countries, are increasingly looking to China as an important partner to position their countries for a green and low-carbon future," she said.

She suggested that European legal principles, including the polluter-pays principle, the prevention

principle and the precautionary principle, could also be advanced in China.

During the symposium, scholars from France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway shared their countries' experiences in environmental law codification, while acknowledging persistent challenges and gaps in enforcement and the continuous process of law revision.

Christoffer Lundqvist, an environmental lawyer at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, expressed anticipation for the successful codification of China's draft.

"Maybe in the future, we'll translate the code and draw inspiration from it," he said.

Wu Kaijie, an assistant professor of law at Peking University who participated in the translation of the Swedish code, also attended the symposium.

"While European practices divide the law into pollution prevention and ecological protection, China's innovative approach expands the framework to include green and low-carbon development as well," Wu said. "While drawing on international experience, we are also responding to the pressing demands of the climate change era and demonstrating China's distinctive and innovative approach to building an ecological civilization."

China, NZ renew sister city ties

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

Mayors and representatives from New Zealand and China are looking to boost cooperation and exchanges at a bilateral forum held in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, on Wednesday.

The 3rd New Zealand-China Mayoral Forum & Festival was themed "Mapping out a New Decade of Sister Cities Relationships". Co-hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Global Cities New Zealand, it drew representatives from 22 cities in both nations, including 10 from New Zealand.

Yang Wanming, president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, said the mayoral forum has been a vital platform for China-New Zealand subnational ties, yielding fruitful outcomes in trade, culture, tourism and education.

He added that his association would work with New Zealand partners to enhance bilateral friendship and practical cooperation.

Nadine Taylor, mayor of Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine region, highlighted her region's sister relationship with the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, a major wine-producing area in China.

"Our partnership with Ningxia has grown throughout the years," Taylor said.

"As we face global challenges, our regions must work together, not only in trade, but in innovation, sustainability and cultural exchange."

David Tyney, head of Marlborough-based Cirro Wines, noted the success of the winemaker exchange programs between the two regions.

"We share information about making wine in New Zealand, while the Chinese winemakers teach me about the Chinese wine market," Tyney said.

His company, which began exporting to China in 2012, has seen its sales volume in the country grow steadily. China is now one of its top three export markets, with sales increasing roughly 20 percent annually in recent years.

Tyney plans to begin producing wine in China this year under his company's New Zealand brand, while also assisting Chinese winemakers in producing their own wines in New Zealand.

Parley Reynolds, strategic development manager for kiwi fruit exporter Zespri in Chengdu, believes stronger sister-city ties will help his company better understand Chinese consumers and expand its business in China.

China is Zespri's largest and most important single country market. Last year, the company sold 150,000 metric tons of kiwi in the Chinese mainland market, a 40 percent increase year-on-year, with total sales exceeding 1.1 billion New Zealand dollars (\$654.6 million) for the first time.

Reynolds is working on a five-year project in Chengdu, monitoring the local kiwi fruit industry to determine if growers can meet Zespri standards and supply the Chinese market during New Zealand's off-season.

"The results so far are very positive, and we are excited about the potential," he said.

"We believe that it is possible to create a win-win situation for all parties involved."

Grant Smith, president of Global Cities New Zealand and mayor of Palmerston North, said the forum's main goal is reconnection.

"We've come with the intentions of renewing our friendships with Chinese cities, reconnecting and seeing where we can continue to do good work in education, trade, research and people-to-people cultural connections," Smith said.

China and New Zealand have had sister city relationships since the 1980s. To date, there are 42 pairs of sister provinces and sister cities.

Healing exchange



A man undergoes special physical therapy treatment with a Nepali singing bowl at the Ninth Silk Road International Exposition and The Investment and Trade Forum for Cooperation between East and West China that commenced in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Wednesday. MA ZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Efforts intensify to protect crops amid heatwave

TAIYUAN — A heatwave is sweeping across northern China, prompting authorities to issue high-temperature alerts and roll out measures to ensure water supply and protect food production.

The National Meteorological Center issued a yellow alert for high temperatures on Wednesday, warning that it could exceed 40 C in parts of Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan and Hubei provinces.

China has a four-tier color-coded weather warning system, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

At present, most of the winter wheat in Shanxi is in its peak grain-filling stage, a critical period during which hot, dry winds can disrupt the process and affect yields.

Yuncheng city, a major winter wheat production area in the province, has implemented a range of measures to combat drought and secure a stable summer grain harvest.

Technicians are deploying drones equipped with sensors to

monitor fields, assessing leaf water content and soil moisture to guide efficient irrigation.

Efforts have also been intensified in Hebei province to protect the wheat harvest. Emergency teams comprising students and teachers from China Agricultural University and local agricultural officials are guiding farmers in using light, targeted irrigation techniques to water their crops effectively.

Shaanxi has prepared emergency water supply plans tailored to the current drought and water conditions to ensure safe drinking water for residents. The province is also closely monitoring reservoir storage levels and optimizing water allocation plans.

This round of high temperatures is expected to be prolonged, intense and widespread, with the current heatwave persisting through Thursday, according to Chen Tao, chief forecaster of the NMC.

XINHUA

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Left: Deng Mingxing (back), director of the Rainbow Bay Senior Welfare Institute in Shanghai's Hongkou district, introduces artificial intelligence to a resident on Feb 26. TANG SIQI / XINHUA
Center: A community worker teaches a senior how to use smart home devices at a center in Beijing's Dongcheng district in October. LI XIN / XINHUA
Right: A merchant introduces a smart robotic convertible wheelchair-bed to seniors during a campaign promoting elderly care in Shanghai in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By XINHUA

On a crisp early spring afternoon, 89-year-old Teng Quanda held his smartphone and asked it — “Little whale, will my stocks rise again?” — causing the room to erupt with laughter.

This scene is not uncommon at Teng's nursing home in Shanghai, where over 20 silver-haired “students” regularly gather to learn how to use the popular artificial intelligence model, DeepSeek.

“They call it ‘little whale’ after the app’s icon,” explained Deng Mingxing, the nursing home’s director. “Once they learned how to use it, they bombarded it with loads of health-related questions. Some even joked about living to 150 with the help of AI.”

Across China, such interactions highlight seniors’ growing acceptance of AI. From health consultations to stock market analysis, they are treating AI as both adviser and companion, seeking assistance in filtering scams, designing wellness plans, or simply enjoying the company of chatty “digital grandchildren”.

Smart technology is also playing an indispensable role in addressing challenges in elderly care, with more than 310 million people, or 22 percent of China’s population, aged 60 and above as of last year.

China pledged in the 2025 Government Work Report that it will improve the policy mechanisms for the development of elderly care services and industries, foster the growth of industries including embodied AI, and support the extensive application of large-scale AI models.

Chongqing and Shenzhen city governments have launched funding initiatives to advance embodied AI systems, a critical move enabling robots to transition from “digital brains” to physical caregivers and household assistants.

Public data has revealed that a single caregiver is often required to attend to as many as 10 elderly residents in China’s nursing homes, indicating a severe shortage of elderly care workers.

Tech giants are racing to fill the gap. In September last year, Tencent’s Robotics X Lab unveiled The Five, a human-environment robot designed to advance human-machine collaboration in elderly care scenarios.

Integrated with proprietary technologies such as a hybrid quadruped-wheeled design, large-area

AI gives golden opportunities to silver-haired seniors

Adapting to new technologies has ability to embolden and empower older adults



Senior residents at Shanghai's Rainbow Bay Senior Welfare Institute learn about the use of large language models in February. TANG SIQI / XINHUA

tactile sensory skin, multi-fingered dexterous manipulators, and safe physical interaction systems, the robot has demonstrated capabilities in navigating real-world environments, transporting objects, and executing complex tasks through human-robot interaction.

“The Five’s core mission is to assist with mobility,” said Zhang Zhengyou, Tencent’s chief scientist and head of the Robotics X Lab. “It can safely transfer elders from beds to

wheelchairs, assist with walking to prevent falls, and help maneuver wheelchairs up ramps.”

Leveraging tactile and visual perception systems coupled with recognition, planning and control algorithms, the robot can ensure secure physical interactions.

However, several challenges remain. The human-robot interaction is not yet “natural” enough. For example, The Five cannot recognize emotions accurately, has a limited

ability to understand dialects and accents, and moves relatively slowly.

The robots also need to improve their navigation and obstacle-avoidance capabilities. Priced at hundreds of thousands of yuan, cost reduction will be essential for mass production domestically.

Meanwhile, assistive robotics are empowering seniors to reclaim their independence at home. In Chongqing, 70-year-old stroke survivor Zhang Li has regained mobility

through a wearable exoskeleton robot purchased by his daughter.

Equipped with multisensory detectors and AI-driven motion analysis, the device predicts movement intent and delivers timely power assistance to the hips and knees.

“These robotic suits are becoming vital tools for seniors and patients recovering from neurological conditions,” said Ge Chengjun, marketing director of a medical technology company in Chongqing. By enhanc-

“Bringing care robots into ordinary households remains a long journey. But coordinated planning to synchronize technological breakthroughs with market readiness can’t wait.”

Zhang Yunquan, researcher at the Institute of Computing Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences

ing motor control through real-time data processing, the technology has improved users’ autonomy in daily activities.

China has led in the development of international standards for assistive robots, which were released by the International Electrotechnical Commission in March. The standards set benchmarks for health monitoring, emergency response and daily task support.

Researchers have also stressed the urgency of technological breakthroughs. Zhang Yunquan, a researcher at the Institute of Computing Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, emphasized that elderly care robotics hinges on breakthroughs in core technologies requiring robust scientific support.

“Bringing care robots into ordinary households remains a long journey,” Zhang said. “But coordinated planning to synchronize technological breakthroughs with market readiness can’t wait. It demands urgent action.”

AI-enabled elderly care should be deeply integrated with home-based, community and institutional care models while embracing humanistic values, thereby achieving harmony between technological innovation and compassionate caregiving, said Wu Yushao, deputy director of the Fudan Institute on Ageing.

For 72-year-old Wang Fenlan, AI has already enriched her daily life. Whether checking the weather using voice commands, practicing tai chi with smart TV guidance, or consulting “little whale” for recipes, AI is there to assist. “Smart devices aren’t just for the young anymore,” she said with a smile.

High-tech solutions transforming medical services

From triage and testing to diagnostics and surgeries, China’s healthcare sector is rapidly integrating artificial intelligence technology into medical practices to improve efficiency and upgrade quality.

At the 2025 China Medical Equipment Exhibition in mid-March, Longwood Valley MedTech unveiled its ROPA orthopedic smart robotic arm, a groundbreaking device packed with AI deep-learning features. Like a super-smart assistant for doctors, it helps with preoperative decision-making and planning.

The robot can be used in joint replacement and spinal surgeries with its AI system being able to create a 3D model of the human joint based on the patient’s CT images, allowing doctors to simulate the surgery in advance and formulate preoperative plans. said Chen Peng, vice-president of the company.

“Manual modeling usually takes a technician a whole day, while our AI system can complete it in just one to three minutes,” Chen added.

He explained that the company’s AI system has already been applied in surgical practices in many hospi-

tals across the country, significantly improving surgery efficiency, safety and accuracy.

Using AI-powered robots can cut the average surgical time by 30 percent, resulting in less anesthesia, lower intraoperative exposure risks and a lower probability of complications, Chen said.

Beijing Children’s Hospital’s first AI pediatrician, that joined the medical team in February, also offers a helping hand.

During a joint consultation at the hospital, 10 children from across the country, each battling complex tumors or undiagnosed conditions, received diagnoses from both the AI pediatrician and a panel of medical experts. The AI pediatrician’s treatment recommendations aligned closely with the expert panels.

“I trust doctors’ judgments, and I also think the opinion of the AI pediatrician can be a valuable reference,” said a father from Tianjin who brought his child for the consultation.

The medical knowledge of the AI pediatrician matches that of experts at top Chinese hospitals. In recent consultations on tough cases, its

conclusions were highly consistent with human experts, according to Wang Xiaochuan, founder and CEO of Baichuan AI, the developer of the AI pediatrician.

“With AI colleagues, we can better protect the health and lives of children,” said Ni Xin, president of Beijing Children’s Hospital, where some 8,000 to 10,000 outpatient and emergency cases are handled daily.

This AI program is expected to expand to primary-level hospitals, communities and households. It will offer on-site training for local doctors and guide home-based medical care to ease the shortage of top-notch pediatric medical resources.

So far, Chinese domestic enterprises have released over 50 AI healthcare, vertical large models, according to reports from by CITIC Securities. These models can alleviate the problem of insufficient grassroots medical resources and improve the efficiency of diagnosis and treatment at a lower cost.

Triage and medical image interpretation are currently the primary scenarios among these large mod-

els. For instance, the AI-powered cognitive function analysis system used in Peking Union Medical College Hospital in Beijing is designed for the early screening of patients and high-risk groups with brain cognitive impairments caused by stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.

The large model RuiPath at Ruijin Hospital, affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, is applied to assist in analyzing pathology. Developed by Huawei, this model integrates multimodal data and incorporates the disease characteristics of the Chinese population, providing pathologists with accurate and efficient support.

Some 6,000 pathological slides are generated daily in Ruijin Hospital, with each doctor examining an average of 200 to 300 slides. Through traditional methods, doctors have to diagnose each slide under a microscope.

However, using RuiPath’s interactive pathological diagnostics, the model can identify lesion areas, reducing the diagnosis time for a single slide to mere seconds.



A robotic arm for orthopedic surgery is displayed at the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing in September. CAO MENGYAO / XINHUA

The application of AI will effectively ease the lack of pathologists in China, improve slide examination efficiency and diagnostic accuracy, and provide more precise support for clinical treatment decisions, said Ning Guang, president of Ruijin Hospital.

However, the ultimate goal of AI technology in healthcare is not to replace doctors, said Liu Zhongjun, director of the spinal surgery institute at Peking University Third Hospital.

Instead, it should aim to relieve doctors of their repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus more on in-depth communication with patients and provide humanistic care, Liu said.

Every technological iteration should be measured by its clinical value and underpinned by patient safety. Only in this way can this AI revolution truly safeguard human health and support the future of human well-being, he said.

XINHUA

VISUAL

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BY LIVINGQING in Kunming
and CHEN MEILING

YUNNAN'S BIODIVERSITY NURTURES MIRACLES of NATURE

Province provides foundation
for biological and ecological security



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Introduction:

Known as the "Kingdom of Plants" and "Kingdom of Animals", Southwest China's Yunnan province has a diverse landscape and rich biodiversity.

Despite covering only 4.1 percent of China's land area, Yunnan has more than 50 percent of the country's plant species, 70 percent of its animal and fungal species, and over 80 percent of its vegetation types.

From towering mountains to tropical rainforest, from plateau lakes to rushing rivers, from peculiar karst landscapes to vibrant red earth, nature's extraordinary craftsmanship has not only endowed Yunnan with breathtaking beauty but also nurtured miracles of life.

It is one of the most species-rich yet ecologically vulnerable regions globally, holding vital importance for biodiversity in China and the world.

First part

Yunnan's rich biodiversity is due to its unique location, complicated landscapes and diverse climate. It has almost all ecosystems on Earth except for ocean and desert.

The province has recorded 25,426 species across 11 major biological groups, including lichens, ferns, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals. Among these, 151 species of wild plants and 242 species of wildlife are under national protection, representing 41 percent and 57.1 percent of the country's protected species, respectively.

Yunnan's rich biodiversity resources provide a critical foundation for national biological and ecological security, as well as socioeconomic development. It serves as a vital source for China's bio-industry, an irreplaceable core strategic resource, a key biodiversity treasure trove and a crucial ecological security barrier in southwestern regions.

Second part:

Yunnan's agricultural industry has been booming. For example, it's one of the areas most suitable for flower plantation. Last year, the province's flower planting area reached 130,000 hectares, including 23,333 hectares dedicated to fresh cut flowers, making it the world's largest producer.

In the first quarter of this year, Yunnan exported 9,134 metric tons of fresh cut flowers, valued at 270 million yuan (\$37.5 million), up 48.2 percent year-on-year. Yunnan accounts for more than 98 percent of China's coffee plantation area and production. In recent years, both the volume and price of coffee have risen.

This harvest season, over 70 percent of the coffee has been picked, with increased yields.

The price of green coffee beans has reached 60 yuan per kilogram, while premium beans command prices as high as 80 yuan per kg, demonstrating significant growth in production and profitability.

Yunnan is also the origin of the world's tea trees and boasts the richest resources of ancient tea plants. By 2023, the province's dry tea leaf production hit 557,000 tons. The certified area for green and organic tea gardens stood at 176,467 hectares, ranking first in China.

Yunnan has developed a thriving fruit industry, featuring blueberries, grapes, citrus, apples and others. Last year, the export value of Yunnan fruits reached 5.27 billion yuan. These products are sold to 117 countries and regions. Meanwhile, the import value of fruits surged to nearly 11.89 billion yuan, hitting a record high. In the first quarter of this year, Yunnan's fruit import and export value grew by 54.3 percent.

Third part:

Yunnan is home to 26 indigenous ethnic groups. This cultural diversity is reflected not only in language but also in clothing, cuisine, festivals, music and dance. People from different ethnic groups have frequent exchanges.

The province shares deep cultural ties with neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Guided by principles such as "living in harmony with nature, respecting its power and utilizing resources wisely", Yunnan's ethnic groups have developed a rich variety of adaptive and symbiotic lifestyles.

By the end of last year, Yunnan boasted three UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites, three World Cultural Heritage Sites, eight national historical and cultural cities and 777 traditional Chinese villages.

Fourth part:

Yunnan adheres to an ecology-first, green development approach, transforming its ecological and resource advantages into industrial strengths. It vigorously promotes turning "lucid waters and lush mountains" into "gold and silver mountains", striving to forge a new green development path that harmonizes ecological beauty, industrial prosperity and public wealth.

The water quality of its nine plateau lakes has shown overall improvement. Batches of eco-friendly urban and rural areas, as well as pristine rivers and lakes, have blossomed across Yunnan. The province ranks among the nation's leaders in forest area, coverage rate and timber reserves.

Whether strolling through streets or wandering by forested lakeshores, people can feel their living environments becoming more beautiful. Green, low-carbon and civilized, healthy production and lifestyles have taken deep root.

The brand of "Living a life called Yunnan" has gained popularity, emerging as a Yunnan model for building a "Beautiful China" and illustrating the continuous enhancement of happiness through a sustainable way of life.

Contact the writers at
chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

ACROSS ASIA

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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.



GREEN EFFORTS

Investment in clean energy gains momentum in Southeast Asia

Private green investment in SEA-6 jumped 43 percent to \$8 billion in 2024, led by solar and waste management. SEA-6 refers to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Most investors are drawn to solar projects in Southeast Asia, with more than 30 percent of 2024's green investments in the region in solar energy, according to the Southeast Asia's Green Economy 2025 Report, released on May 6 by Bain & Company in collaboration with GenZero, Google, Standard Chartered and Temasek.

Corporations and climate funds are leading the charge, with infrastructure fund participation rising 14-fold.

Malaysia and Singapore accounted for over 60 percent of deal activity. Foreign investment into SEA-6 tripled, especially from outside Asia-Pacific region, or APAC.

However, domestic investments in Southeast Asia declined by 40 percent — a trend that needs urgent reversal. Yet, sustained momentum requires all stakeholders — governments, investors, and businesses — to collaborate and drive practical, scalable outcomes.

Call for cooperation

While green investments may be growing, current projections show Southeast Asian nations are not on track to meet their 2030 targets, with the gaps between actual emissions and targets expected to widen by 2040 and 2050.

The report noted that Southeast Asia remains particularly vulnerable, as its emissions have yet to peak.

According to the report, Southeast Asia must pursue a systemic approach to unlock green growth that strengthens economic resilience, narrows up to 50 percent of the region's emissions gap by 2030, and potentially adds \$120 billion to regional GDP.

The report stressed the importance of deepening APAC-SEA ties,



Top: Joggers pass by a floating solar panel farm on the Bedok Reservoir in Singapore in 2023. DAVID GOLDMAN / AP. Above: Workers walk across a floating solar panel farm in Binh Thuan Province, Vietnam, in 2021. NGUYEN TAN TUAN / SOLENT NEWS

\$8 billion

private green investment in 2024 in SEA-6, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

to build a thriving green economy.

Shared concerns — such as energy security, strong trade relations, and growing foreign direct investment — make the case for closer cooperation. This alignment is even more critical in today's volatile political and economic climate.

SEA and APAC are key players in the global decarbonization journey, jointly accounting for a significant share of global emissions — APAC at 50 percent, and SEA at 7.5 percent.

Both regions remain highly reliant on fossil fuels, and most countries are not on track to meet the 2030 targets. Without urgent interventions, the emissions gap could widen dramatically by 2040 and 2050, the report said.

"With only five years left to 2030,

the time for bold, pragmatic action is now," said Franziska Zimmermann, managing director of sustainability at Temasek. "SEA has a unique opportunity to lead systems-level transformation that balances climate goals with energy security and economic priorities."

The report identifies systemic barriers to green development, such as underdeveloped infrastructure, regulatory fragmentation, limited access to finance and reliance on fossil fuels.

Addressing these barriers requires coordinated actions across energy, transport, land use, and industry. According to the report, key regional opportunities lie in transforming agriculture and land use (sustainable bioeconomy), modernizing electricity grids, and expanding electric vehicle ecosystems.

Financing bottleneck

While green investment in SEA-6 increased by 43 percent year-on-year, there remains an annual green finance gap exceeding \$50 billion.

International capital inflows are growing, with foreign investment

outside the APAC region into SEA-6 green projects tripling in 2024. However, domestic investment fell by 40 percent, signaling the need for more stable internal financing mechanisms.

Carbon market development is also gaining traction. Yet, unlocking its full potential requires stronger policy frameworks, demand generation, and robust infrastructure.

"Southeast Asia's carbon markets are gaining momentum, but we can do more to unlock their full climate and economic potential," said Anshari Rahman, director of policy and analytics at GenZero.

"To deliver lasting social and economic gains, supply must also meet international benchmarks like ICVCM and CORSIA — where global demand is headed."

The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market, or ICVCM, is an independent governance body that establishes and maintains the highest standards of ethics, sustainability, and transparency for the global voluntary carbon market.

The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, or CORSIA, is a global market-based solution that airlines can use as a major step to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Additionally, AI is both a risk and a solution as for its high electricity demand and potential to transform the sector, experts said.

Data centers could add 2 percent to emissions by 2030, but with clean energy and smart AI, they can also help cut emissions. Sectors like agriculture and energy could see a 3 to 5 percent drop in emissions if countries like Vietnam invest in AI.

"With just five years to 2030, our window for action to avoid the worst effects of climate change is rapidly closing. We need to increase the momentum and focus on pragmatic solutions with near-term impact," said Franziska.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE & VIET NAM NEWS, VIETNAM

AI-driven bots make up half of web traffic: Report

Automated bot traffic surpassed the human-generated type for the first time in a decade, constituting 51 percent of all web traffic in 2024, according to a recent report.

This shift is attributed to the rise of artificial intelligence and Large Language Models, which have made it easier to create and scale bots for malicious purposes, the report said.

The 2025 Imperva Bad Bot Report, released in late April by cybersecurity firm Imperva, drew from data collected in 2024, including the blocking of 13 trillion bad bot requests across thousands of domains and industries.

It compared bot traffic between 2023 and 2024, and found bad bots to be most prevalent in the gambling, gaming, automotive and travel sectors.

Of the total bot traffic, 37 percent were found to be malicious activities, including data scraping, payment fraud, account takeovers, theft of credentials and distributed denial-of-service, or DDoS. DDoS attackers make websites unavailable to legitimate users by flooding the sites with queries.

With the help of AI, bad bots can mimic human behavior — including mouse movements and clicks — making them difficult to detect and block, said the report.

"The surge in AI-driven bot creation has serious implications for businesses worldwide," said Tim Chang, general manager of application security at Thales, a global cybersecurity company.

The emergence of advanced AI tools — including ChatGPT, Byte-Spider Bot, ClaudeBot, Google Gemini, Perplexity AI and Cohere — has transformed the methods by which attackers execute cyber threats.

For instance, bad bots automatically crack outdated mobile applications that do not enforce mandatory updates, write codes to increase attack volumes and collect large quantities of sensitive data.

In 2024, Imperva blocked an average of 2 million AI-powered cyberattacks daily.

Such traffic typically comes in the form of social media post hijacking, where bots produce inflammatory or empathetic messages to rouse viewers to engage with the content, said Jan Sysmans, Appdome's mobile app security evangelist based in Singapore.

"The people behind these bots are trying to propagate their own agenda and create tension to spark a flame," he added.

"There isn't a standard way these bots approach (hijacking). It just encourages users to engage in the content, which influences their algorithm. Subsequently, users will get fed more of such inflammatory or empathetic con-

tent, creating an echo chamber effect."

Globally, the travel sector is the most targeted, accounting for over a quarter of all bot attacks. It is trailed by the retail, education and financial services sector, according to the Imperva study.

Notably, travel websites face an increase in simple bot attacks, possibly launched by less sophisticated criminals using AI tools.

Disrupting travel

These attacks include "seat spinning," where bots simulate the booking process of flight tickets up to the payment step, without completing the purchase. This hogs tickets and denies potential customers access to them, disrupting airline businesses and jeopardizing their reputation.

AI tools flooding travel websites with traffic may also inflate the demand and costs of tickets.

Online retailers faced threats, including scalping, credential stuffing, gift card fraud and DDoS — all year round in 2024 as opposed to just during festive seasons in 2023.

Scalping involves buying many of the same items such as limited edition goods or concert tickets at the usual price and reselling them at higher prices.

Credential stuffing involves taking over someone's online account using stolen usernames and passwords.

Financial services, telecom, health-care and retail are the most targeted industries for bot attacks on application programming

interfaces, or APIs. These sectors depend on APIs for critical operations and sensitive transactions, making them prime targets for such sophisticated bot attacks.

APIs act like a bridge between applications, allowing them to share data. For instance, an e-commerce platform that accepts credit card payments or bank transfers is linked via APIs to the payment service firm or the bank.

Bots typically steal customer information or competitive intelligence, abuse promotional mechanisms and exploit vulnerabilities in checkout systems for fraud, according to the study.

"Businesses need to take steps to protect themselves from bots and online fraud," Imperva said, urging businesses to implement multifactor authentication measures and real-time bot detection to protect customers.

On how internet users should protect themselves from falling prey to the effects of bad bots, Sysmans said: "It is going to be very hard, with how advanced AI and technology is now. But one must always be vigilant and ask, 'Is this too good to be true?'"

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Great Indian bustard nears vanishing point in South Asia

A treacherous combination of habitat degradation, illegal hunting and predation has pushed the Great Indian bustard, one of the world's heaviest flying birds, to the brink of extinction in Pakistan and India, wildlife experts and conservation groups warn.

With an alarmingly small global population of just between 200 and 250, the bird has been classified as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN.

In Pakistan, the situation is particularly dire, with the estimated population of the long-legged bird, endemic to the subcontinent, hovering between 25 and 35, according to the World Wildlife Fund for Nature

Pakistan, or WWF-Pakistan.

India's western states of Gujarat and Rajasthan serve as primary habitats for the species, locally known as *gurano*. In Pakistan, the bustard is found deep within the arid expanse of the Cholistan desert or occasionally spotted in the grassy plains of the Thar desert.

"Agricultural and infrastructural expansion has severely damaged the natural habitats of the Great Indian bustard, particularly in India, leading to a dramatic decline in its population over recent decades," said Muhammad Jamshed Iqbal Chaudhry, senior manager for research and conservation at WWF-Pakistan.

Chaudhry highlighted additional threats, such as predation by feral

dogs and frequent electrocution from overhead power lines, as major factors contributing to the species' dwindling numbers.

Ali Usman Bukhari, an official from the Punjab Wildlife Department, said local misconceptions have further endangered the bird.

"Some locals wrongly believe that the meat of the Great Indian bustard has medicinal properties similar to those of the Houbara bustard, a migratory bird," he said.

Physically distinctive due to its horizontal stance and long bare legs, the Great Indian bustard weighs between 4 and 5 kilograms, significantly heavier than the Houbara bustard.

The Houbara bustard itself has historically been a popular hunting target among Arab royalty, who value its meat for its purported medicinal qualities. As winter descends upon Siberia, migratory birds, including Houbara, flock to Pakistan's lakes and riverbeds, seeking refuge from harsh conditions.

Conservation challenges

The Punjab Wildlife Department recently established the "Great Indian Bustard Wildlife Sanctuary" along the border areas near the Cholistan desert.

"Since the establishment of this sanctuary, poaching incidents have notably decreased over the past two years," Bukhari said. "We are now



The Great Indian bustard. SIMERPREET CHEEMA / UNSPLASH

beginning to see more frequent sightings of the bird within the protected boundaries."

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Rab Nawaz, an Islamabad-based wildlife expert, emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive "species conservation action plan" to halt the bird's slide toward extinction. Calling for more designated sanc-

tuaries, he suggested involving the local communities in conservation efforts, citing the successful recovery story of Pakistan's national animal, the *markhor*, a large wild goat whose population has rebounded from the brink of extinction to a current estimate of between 3,500 and 5,000.

"The real culprits behind illegal hunting of the Great Indian bustard are not ordinary locals but influential hunters," Nawaz said. "By actively involving local communities, who have a vested interest in protecting their environment, the government can more effectively curb illegal hunting practices."

Echoing Nawaz's sentiment, WWF-Pakistan's Chaudhry urged for "strict enforcement" of laws banning the hunting of the Great Indian bustard to ensure population growth.

DAWN, PAKISTAN

WORLD

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Editor's note: China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.



Left: Ben Stevenson directs dancers of the National Ballet of China during a rehearsal of *Cinderella* in Beijing in 2018. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Right: Ben Stevenson; Feng Ying (right), director of the National Ballet of China; and ballet master Wang Caijun strike a pose on the Great Wall in 2018.



Japan's farm minister quits over free rice gaffe

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo and HOU JUNJIE in Beijing

Former Japanese environment minister Shinjiro Koizumi was appointed the new agriculture minister on Wednesday following the resignation of Taku Eto over his controversial remarks about rice.

Koizumi's immediate priority will be addressing public concerns over soaring rice prices, which are attributed to a poor harvest and elevated demand from a boom in tourism.

Speaking at a news conference, Koizumi said Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has instructed him to explore the release of government-held rice reserves through negotiated contracts. In response, Koizumi ordered ministry officials to cancel an auction scheduled for next week and swiftly develop concrete measures.

"The details are still being worked out, but I want this to be a clear first step toward bringing rice prices down," he said.

"I have directed officials to design a new system from scratch. If there is demand, we may consider releasing rice reserves without limit."

Koizumi, chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party's Research Commission on Fishery Policies, previously served as director of the party's agriculture and forestry division. Ishiba spoke of his "experience, insight, and passion for reform in both agriculture and the fisheries industry".

Eto submitted his resignation to Ishiba on Wednesday amid widespread criticism over comments he made at a Sunday political fundraising event — that he had never bought rice. "Frankly, my supporters give me quite a lot of rice. I have so much rice in my pantry at home that I could sell it," he said.

Economic pressure

The remarks were widely criticized for seeming insensitive amid soaring rice prices and mounting economic pressure on the public.

Data on Monday showed supermarket rice prices rising again in the week through May 11, to 4,268 yen (\$29.7) for a 5-kilogram bag. This marked an increase of 1.3 percent from the previous week and more than double the 2,108 yen recorded during the corresponding period last year.

"At a time when rice prices must come down, public trust is essential. If I have damaged that trust, then stepping down is the right thing to do for the people," Eto said.

The resignation is the first from the second Ishiba Cabinet, which was inaugurated on Nov 11.

With the House of Councillors election approaching, Eto's dismissal could deal a major blow to the administration, said Yoshihiko Noda, president of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan.

Rice prices are arguably the greatest public concern at present, Noda said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at jiang.xueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Ballet maestro's fond China memories

Ben Stevenson reflects on decades of cultural exchange, heartfelt friendships

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Ben Stevenson compared his first visit to China in 1979 to the ballet he choreographed for the National Ballet of China: just like Cinderella when she laid her eyes for the first time on the prince in the ballroom, he fell in love with China when he first saw her.

Stevenson, a Briton and recipient of the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his great contribution to ballet, has had a long career.

He began his journey as a ballet dancer with the Royal Ballet in London, and shifted to the role of artistic director at the National Ballet of Washington, DC; Chicago Ballet; Houston Ballet; and Texas Ballet Theater since 1971. He has spent more than 50 years in the United States ballet world.

His connection with China started when the two countries established diplomatic relations. He was the artistic director at the Houston Ballet.

Turning 90 years old soon, Stevenson is not good with dates and numbers any more. He cannot remember exactly how many times he has visited China other than that he did "many times".

But he remembers, with fondness and tenderness, details of his many trips to China, such as the automatic curtain in a Beijing theater and a KFC fried chicken picnic on the Great Wall.

He remembers speaking to a monk in a monastery outside Beijing. The monk was 97 years old and was educated in Oxford many decades ago. He remembers he had a good laugh when crashing into a bus riding a brakeless bike in Beijing. He remembers a delicious lunch where the restaurant cooked fish he fished up.

Speaking to China Daily in Houston when he came from Fort Worth, Texas, to attend the opening of his *The Sleeping Beauty* by Houston Ballet, Stevenson walked down the memory lane.

The first trip to China was through Europe and took a couple of stops before landing in Beijing.

"We landed in a field in Beijing and they threw our bags out on the grass. We had to carry them into a hut. Now the Beijing airport is the most glamorous in the world," Stevenson said.

"But it was the best time because the simple things were the best and just amazing. It was in a way my most favorite time of going there, those first years at the beginning."

During that trip, Stevenson visited the Beijing Dance Academy and the National Ballet of China (then the Central Ballet Troupe). He made friends with legendary dancer Dai Ailian and then academy principal Chen Jinqing, and throughout the years, many others.

Stevenson gave a few lessons at the Beijing Dance Academy during his first visit. He went back to teach many times after that. He was deeply

impressed and touched by students' technical caliber and their passion to learn the new techniques and ideas that he offered. In the end, he proposed to invite two students to Houston Ballet for a summer of training, thus beginning the first ballet dancer exchanges between the United States and China.

One of the students, Li Cunxin, became the first Chinese principal dancer at Houston Ballet. Later, Li Anlin, once with the National Ballet of China, was invited by Stevenson to join Houston Ballet in 1989 to be another principal dancer.

Li Anlin has worked with Stevenson for more than 30 years. When Stevenson left Houston Ballet to become the artistic director of Texas Ballet Theater in 2003, he invited Li to come with him and be the master of the troupe.

Stevenson misses his teaching time in Beijing. "When I was at the Beijing Dance Academy, at the end of two or three weeks of teaching, all the students in the class would have a little party," he said. "If someone came from some village, they'd play a little drum or someone else would sing a song. That was fabulous."

When it was Stevenson's turn, he sang a Chinese children's song, *I Love Beijing Tian'anmen*, that he learned from Li Cunxin. "When I sang this song, they thought it was hysterical," Stevenson said.

Modern dance

Stevenson helped China develop its modern dance. "In the beginning, the Ministry of Culture said, what do you think we need now in dance, and I said choreography," Stevenson recalled.

"I said, you have to learn something about modern dance. They all laughed. The interpreter explained to me that to them, the word modern sounded like *maodan* in Chinese — cat egg. That was a good laugh."

Stevenson began teaching choreography by asking each student to find a little piece of music and do something of their own.

"The first boy had a little piece of music and he came out with a sword and clocked a hero. The second guy came out with a sword and clocked it. Everyone was like a hero," he said.

"In the end, I got one boy and I tied ... his hand and his arm to the bar and he's lying on the floor. I said, now choreograph something. So he went and I said, now you're using your imagination."

In 1985, Stevenson worked with the academy to design and develop China's first Department of Choreography. Many students from the program became China's first generation of influential modern dance choreographers.

"All those boys in that class would become so successful in different ways," Stevenson said. "One of them choreographed dance for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics."

Stevenson also had extensive collaboration with the National Ballet of China. He staged his works *L* and *Three Preludes* with the company in 1980.

In 1982, working with a famed Chinese costume designer, composer and conductor, he created and staged a piece called *Zheng Banqiao*, namesake of an 18th-century artist said to have been most

renowned for his skills at painting bamboo. The program won critical claim when it was premiered in Houston.

In 1995, Stevenson brought Houston Ballet to China for a two-week tour of his *Romeo and Juliet*. More than 5 million Chinese watched the ballet through live TV broadcast.

In 2002, Stevenson worked with the National Ballet of China and created a new piece, *Fountain of Tears*, based on Russian music and a poem by Russian poet Pushkin. "It worked quite well in China. People really liked it," Stevenson said.

Nation's award

The last time Stevenson visited China was in 2018 when he collaborated with the National Ballet of China to stage *Cinderella* that he choreographed.

At the opening night, Stevenson was surprised by an award presentation: he was named one of the 40 "Most Influential Foreign Experts" for the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up, a prestigious honor bestowed by the country.

Stevenson misses China and wishes that he could spend some time there once more.

"I still have a lot of friends there, and some of them are as old as I am, 90 or something."

"I was invited last year to go back to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Beijing Dance Academy, but I could not get on a plane, it was just too much for me. I am so upset that I can't go back to China and see them. My heart was there but my body wasn't."

'Red alert': Fires drive tropical forest loss to record high

PARIS — Eighteen soccer pitches every minute of every hour of every day — that is the alarming extent of tropical rainforests destroyed last year, in large measure because of fires fueled by climate change, researchers reported on Wednesday.

Tally it all up and the world lost 67,000 square kilometers of precious primary tropical forest, an area double the size of Belgium, last year.

The loss was 80 percent higher than in 2023, according to the Global Forest Watch think tank.

"This level of forest destruction is completely unprecedented in more than 20 years of data," Global Forest Watch co-director Elizabeth Goldman said in a briefing. "This is a global red alert."

Fires are responsible for nearly half of these losses, surpassing for the first time agriculture as the main driver of destruction.

Loss of tree cover last year — from

deforestation and fires, deliberate or accidental — generated more than 3 billion metric tons of CO2 pollution, exceeding India's emissions from fossil fuel use over the same period.

Tropical forests, which harbor the highest concentrations of biodiversity, are the most threatened of any forest biomes on the planet.

They are also sponges for CO2, helping to prevent global temperatures from rising even faster than they have.

Forest fires are both a cause and effect of climate change, injecting billions of tons of CO2 in the atmosphere that in turn accelerate warming and the conditions leading to more destructive fires.

The exceptional fires last year were fueled by "extreme conditions" that made them more intense and difficult to control, the authors said.

Climate change driven by the massive burning of fossil fuels and boosted by natural El Niño weather phenomenon made 2024 the hottest year on record, with temperatures averaging more than 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels.

Historically, most fires in tropical forests are set to clear land for agriculture and livestock, especially the "big four" commodities: palm oil, soy, beef and timber.

Brazil saw 2.8 million hectares of primary forest destroyed last year, two-thirds to fires typically started to make way for soybean and cattle.

Measurable progress
In 2023, Brazil made measurable progress in reducing forest loss during President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's first year after returning to office.

"But this progress is threatened by the expansion of agriculture,"

said Sarah Carter, a researcher at the World Resources Institute in Washington.

The Brazilian Amazon was most affected, with destruction at its highest level since 2016.

Forest protection is high on the agenda of the COP30 United Nations climate conference that Brazil will host in November in the tropical city of Belem.

Neighboring Bolivia's forest loss — 1.5 million hectares — rose by 200 percent last year, with a record 3.6 percent of primary forests destroyed in a single year, mostly because of fires set to clear land for industrial-scale farms, according to the report.

The picture is mixed elsewhere, with improvements in Indonesia and Malaysia but a sharp deterioration in the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While policies have resulted in a



An aerial view of the Amazon rainforest deforested by raging fires in Labrea, Amazonas State, Brazil, on Aug 20. EVARISTO SA / AFP

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slowdown of the extent of forests lost to palm oil plantations, notably in Asia, the destructive footprint of other commodities has expanded, including avocados, coffee and cocoa.

"We shouldn't assume that the drivers are always going to be the

same," said Rod Taylor, director of the World Resources Institute's forests program.

"One new driver we are seeing, for example, is linked to mining and critical minerals."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

WHO adopts historic pact on pandemic

China's role lauded for helping boost global capacity for prevention, response

By ZHENG WANYIN in Geneva
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

China has actively participated in the negotiations of a global pandemic agreement and has advocated multilateralism, unity, and cooperation among nations, said an official from China's delegation to the 78th World Health Assembly.

The WHO Pandemic Agreement, after three years of intensive negotiation among WHO member states, was formally adopted on Tuesday in Geneva at the plenary session of the assembly.

Hu Guang, who is in charge of health emergency response at China's National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, and who was deeply involved in the drafting and negotiations of the agreement, told China Daily on Tuesday: "Guided by the vision of building a global community of health for all proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, China has practiced true multilateralism and has advocated for strengthening solidarity and cooperation among nations during the talks."

"It has supported the WHO in playing a central coordination role in order to jointly improve the global health governance system and boost worldwide capacities for prevention, precaution and response."

On issues such as pandemic prevention and surveillance, China has maintained a scientific approach, put forward reasonable amendments to the text, and played an active role in drafting relevant provisions, he said.

He noted that, thanks to China's efforts, parties agreed to focus the scope of surveillance on newly emerging and reemerging infectious diseases with pandemic potential, as well as clarify the scope of institutions for information sharing.

"In addition, together with Brazil, Indonesia, Bangladesh and other countries, within the framework of 'Friends of Fairness', China actively responds to the reasonable demands of developing countries for fair access to health products, demonstrating its role as a responsible major country," he added.



The 78th World Health Assembly is being held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday. DU ZHEYU / XINHUA

Briefly

CHINA Wang Yi to chair Pacific Islands FMs' meeting

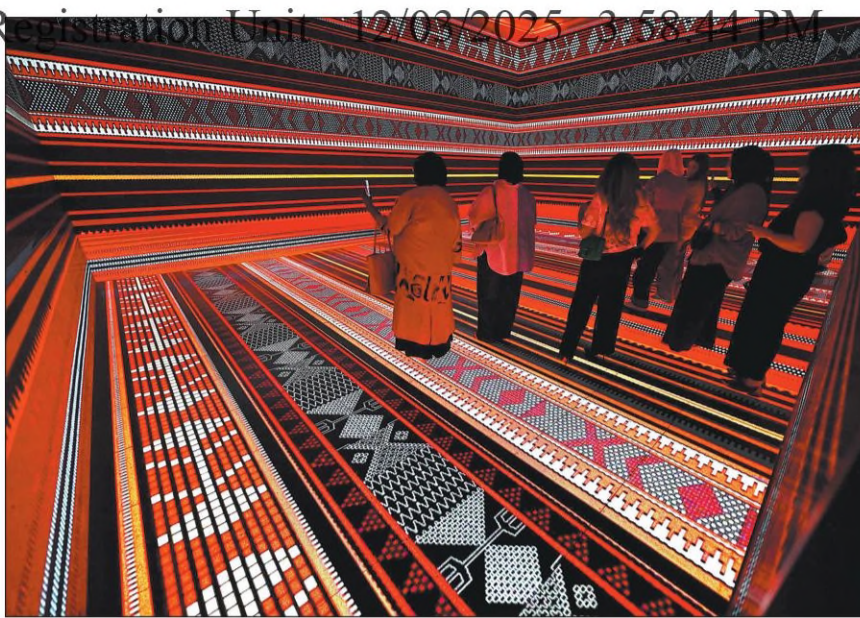
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will chair the third China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Xiamen, Fujian province, from May 28 to 29, the first of its kind to be held offline in China. Foreign ministers or representatives from 11 island countries having diplomatic relations with China, and Deputy Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Feala Nevasi will attend the meeting. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Wednesday. China highly values its ties with the Pacific Island countries and is ready to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, seek common development to build an even closer China-Pacific Island

countries community with a shared future, she added.

RUSSIA Putin visits Kursk for 1st time after Ukraine ouster

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the western Kursk region for the first time since Russian forces ejected Ukrainian troops from the area. The Kremlin said that during the visit on Tuesday, Putin met volunteer organizations in the region and visited the Kursk-1 nuclear power plant. State television showed Putin meeting volunteers and local officials in the region. Russia said in late April that it had ejected Ukrainian troops from the Kursk region.

CHINA DAILY — AGENCIES



Weaving magic

People visit a Sadu 3D light artwork display at the Sadu House in Kuwait City, the capital of Kuwait, on Tuesday, during an event to celebrate the announcement of Kuwait City as a global hub for Al Sadu weaving. Al Sadu, a form of wool weaving practiced in Kuwait and across the Arabian Peninsula, epitomizes cultural tradition and artistic skill.

YASSER AL-ZAYYAT / AFP

Tariffs make 'American Dream' unreachable for most

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

When Walmart announced that it will have to raise prices due to tariffs imposed by his administration, US President Donald Trump lashed out at the giant retailer and said the company should just "EAT THE TARIFFS" and "not charge valued customers ANYTHING."

"I'll be watching and so will your customers!!!" Trump posted on social media over the weekend, saying that "Walmart should stop trying to blame Tariffs as the reason for raising prices throughout the chain."

In response, a Walmart spokesperson said: "We have always worked to keep our prices as low as possible, and we won't stop. We'll keep prices as low as we can for as long as we can, given the reality of small retail margins."

Walmart won't be the only business to raise prices to offset the extra cost from tariffs, and the "American Dream" will be further out of reach for the majority of people as a result, according to studies.

An analysis by the Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity, which tracks the Minimal Quality of Life Index, or MQL,

found that for the bottom 60 percent of US households, a "minimal quality of life" is out of reach.

The study analyzed not only basic necessities like housing, food and healthcare but also education, transportation, technology, leisure and more.

"By tracking costs associated with this 'basket of American Dream essentials', the MQL provides a more holistic view of what it means for individuals to have a minimal quality of life in America," the study said.

Doubling cost

The study found that between 2001 and 2023, the cost of affording a basic level of economic security doubled — housing costs soared 130 percent, healthcare 178 percent and savings required to attend an in-state, public university 122 percent. However, median earnings declined for this group by 4 percent after adjusting for MQL.

The study said in 2023, the bottom 60 percent of households earned just 22.1 percent of all disposable income, but needed 39 percent to meet MQL. On average, these households earn \$38,000 per year, a shortfall of more than \$29,000 to meet the MQL.

These households now face ris-

ing costs of living as a result of the new tariffs. Goods such as clothing and textiles will see the highest price jumps, according to an analysis by The Budget Lab at Yale. The study was based on the effective tax rates as of May 12, when the US and China reached a deal to lower the 145 percent tax hike on Chinese goods to 30 percent.

In the short run, consumers will see prices increase 15 percent for leather products (shoes and handbags), 14 percent for apparel and 11 percent for textiles (beddings and towels).

In the long run, after global supply shifts, leather prices will remain 19 percent higher, while apparel will stay 16 percent and textiles 14 percent higher, according to the analysis.

Food prices will rise 2.3 percent in the short run and stay 2.3 percent higher in the long run. Fresh produce will initially be 3 percent more expensive, while stabilizing at 2.9 percent higher.

Meanwhile, prices of motor vehicles will rise 9.3 percent in the short run and will stay 6.2 percent higher (an additional \$3,000 per car on average) in the long run.

The analysis said tariffs burden households at the bottom of the income ladder more than those at

the top as a percentage of income.

"Traditional headline economic indicators like GDP and unemployment tell us the economy is thriving, but they don't reflect the lived reality of most Americans," Gene Ludwig, chairman of Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity, said in a statement.

"Americans are working harder than ever, fueling our economic growth, but the benefits of that hard work are not being distributed in a way that supports upward mobility for too many middle- and low-income Americans."

The tariff policy is not just causing price increases for US consumers, but it is also projected to reduce the country's GDP and increase the rate of unemployment, according to an analysis by The Budget Lab at Yale, based on the effective tax rates.

According to the analysis, the effective tariff rates will result in extra expenses of \$2,823 per household, and the 2025 GDP output will be reduced by 0.65 percent with a long-term reduction of 0.3 percent per year.

By the end of the year, unemployment is projected to rise by 0.35 percent — meaning 456,000 more people will go without a paycheck compared to a year ago.

New York City expecting a drop in foreign tourists

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

New York City cut its forecast for the number of international tourists by 17 percent this year as travel experts say many are expressing concerns over traveling to the US amid strengthened border policies, heightened 'America First' rhetoric and geopolitics.

New York City Tourism and Conventions, the city's tourism agency, lowered the number of foreign visitors it expects this year to around 12.1 million from an estimated 14.6 million projected in December. Altogether, there will be 64.1 million tourists, both domestic and foreign, a drop of 3.5 million from the prior estimate.

It's not just New York seeing tourists change their minds.

"My husband and I said 'no, we do not want to go anymore,'" Karen Hyf from Toronto, Canada, told CTV News after canceling their vacation to Florida over trade frictions between the two countries. Hyf and her husband have been vacationing in the Sunshine State of Florida for decades.

Last year, Canada ranked as the biggest source of foreign visitors to the US, attracting over 20.4 million visits, generating \$20.5 billion in spending and supporting 140,000 jobs in the US. Tourism in New York City is heavily reliant on Canadians.

But after the Trump administration imposed tariffs on its North American neighbor, there was a drop of 35 percent in the number of Canadians traveling across the border in April to the US when compared with the year before. A 20 percent decrease in air travel also occurred last month.

Six in 10 Canadian adults surveyed by Longwoods International said they would likely stay away from the US this year due to the

current administration. And more than a third have canceled planned vacations this year over political tensions with the US, Forbes reports. At least 40 percent will travel domestically instead.

The challenges occurring in the US travel industry come after the dire impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. That era led to a significant drop in flights and fewer stays at hotels.

Additionally, several countries in Europe and Asia have updated their country's travel advisories or issued guidance to citizens traveling to the US. Many tourists in the UK have expressed concern over visiting the US.

Tourism Economics, an industry monitoring group, also revised its travel forecasts for all visitors to the US in February from a predicted growth of 9 percent this year to a downward trend of 5.1 percent. If this is followed by a decline in demand for hotels by 0.8 percent, it could cause an \$18 billion drop in spending in 2025, it said.

Negative sentiment

Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, believes that some of the negative sentiment among international travelers was because of "geopolitical friction," he told The New York Times.

The US Travel Association also estimates that inbound international visitor numbers will not reach 2019 levels until the last quarter of 2025 and spending by international visitors will not pick back up to pre-pandemic levels until 2026.

It describes international travelers as "essential to the US economy, spending more, staying longer and supporting jobs and businesses in every corner of the country."

In New York City, international visitors spent over \$26 billion, and another \$25 billion was spent by all other visitors in 2024. Overall



A man walks past a Ferris wheel at Coney Island in New York City on Tuesday. SPENCER PLATT / GETTY IMAGES

spending by tourists is estimated to drop by \$4 billion this year.

Visits to the United States by Chinese and international tourists were down at the beginning of this year compared with 2024.

Globally, Chinese tourists collectively spent \$196.5 billion in 2023 on international travel, a report by the UN Tourism found.

US Travel Association Executive Vice-President Tori Emerson Barnes told China Daily that before the pandemic, China was one of the "fastest growing markets to the US" with Chinese tourists spending more on average than visitors from other countries.

On average, Chinese tourists traveling independently to the US and not as part of a group tour, spent around \$10,445 per trip in 2023, according to the National Travel and Tourism Office, the agency that monitors tourism within the US Department of Commerce.

"Yet, international visitation remains well below 2019 levels and continues to decline," the US Travel

Association said. "In 2024, the US welcomed 72.4 million international visitors, 7 million fewer than in 2019."

Most US airlines have also signaled that they expect a sluggish year ahead. Delta, American Airlines and Southwest cut their 2025 financial forecasts as the outlook looks uncertain.

But in a bright spot, two US airlines will expand flights to Beijing and Shanghai this year after China changed its travel policy to allow foreign tourists to visit the country visa-free for up to 10 days.

China updated its visa-free transit policy in December to allow tourists from 54 countries, including the US, to travel for up to 240 hours to 24 Chinese provinces.

Annabelle Aston, director of International Communications at United Airlines, told China Daily that United Airlines launched "the new flight between Los Angeles and Beijing on May 1. It will operate three times weekly on a Boeing 787-9 aircraft."

BUSINESS

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Experts: Nation leads in green industry practices

By ZHENG XIN
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

International energy agencies have highlighted China's essential role in leading the global shift toward sustainable practices, citing the country's accelerated uptake of grid expansion and renewable capacity additions as a formidable example for the world.

Speaking at the International Forum on Power System Transformation 2025 in Beijing on Tuesday, co-hosted by State Grid Corp of China and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Francesco La Camera, director-general of IRENA, said: "China's accelerated uptake of grid expansion and renewable capacity additions serves as a formidable example."

Of the significant increase in global renewable power generation capacity, the majority of this growth has come from China, he said.

He commended China's "huge efforts" in driving clean energy transition, particularly in strengthening infrastructure to integrate large-scale renewable energy, setting a "model for the world."

China has built over half a million kilometers of transmission lines in the past decade, accounting for more than a third of global additions, with ultra-high voltage (UHV) lines effectively connecting renewable-rich western and northern



Technicians install solar panels at a saltern in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

regions with eastern demand centers, he said.

China, with massive investments and technological advances, has dramatically transformed its power grid security and reliability in recent years and now boasts the world's highest voltage levels, largest renewable energy integration and most robust resource allocation capabilities.

Currently, China has become the country with the largest scale of new energy connected to the grid globally and the fastest development speed. Technological innovation provides strong support for the safe and stable supply of electricity and for green, low-carbon development.

The country's grid companies, including State Grid Corp of China, have also been actively stepping up investment in the construction of UHV power transmission projects, or the power transmission lines operating with greater than 800 kilovolts of direct current (DC), or 1,000 kV of alternating current (AC),

enabling efficient long-distance transmission of massive amounts of power.

With the deepening energy revolution, new technologies and models like smart grids, new energy storage and virtual power plants are continuously surfacing. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, and their integration throughout the power sector, is driving a new wave of innovation in power technology.

Compared with traditional transmission lines, UHV lines not only increase transmission capacity and extend transmission distances, but also reduce transmission losses. This technology is crucial for connecting remote renewable energy sources in the west to demand centers in the east.

In recent years, China has been continuously improving the layout of power transmission. By the end of 2024, the country had completed and put into operation 42 UHV AC/DC projects, including 38 by State

Grid Corp of China and four by China Southern Power Grid, with cross-provincial and cross-regional power transmission capacity exceeding 340 million kW.

Angela Wilkinson, secretary-general and CEO of the World Energy Council, said that the world is at a critical juncture in energy transition and that China's energy journey is "shaping the global energy landscape."

Wilkinson added that the State Grid has the potential to become a "founder of the next stage of the global energy governance system."

Wan Jinsong, deputy head of China's National Energy Administration, affirmed that actively addressing climate change and accelerating energy transition have become the global consensus.

China is building a new power system in line with global energy development trends and the country is willing to cooperate with other countries on energy technology innovation, Wan said.

CEEC doing brisk business with China

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) are set to attract more Chinese businesses seeking trade and investment opportunities across the region, said market watchers and domestic exporters, noting that strong economic complementarity will meaningfully contribute to both regional and global economic development.

Speaking ahead of the fourth China-CEEC Expo in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province, which runs from Thursday to Sunday, they said that against the backdrop of global economic challenges and trade policy uncertainties in the United States, companies from both sides are working to consolidate and expand their presence in each other's markets.

The CEEC offers a compelling combination of manufacturing capabilities, innovation potential and access to the broader European market, said Wan Zhe, a professor specializing in

regional economic development at Beijing Normal University.

Combined with China's well-developed industrial base and growing demand for high-quality imports, and the connectivity offered by the China-Europe freight train service, Wan said the two sides present significant synergies in sectors such as green energy, digital technologies, healthcare and advanced manufacturing.

Sang Baichuan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' Institute of International Economy in Beijing, said that rising uncertainty over US trade policy is driving companies in China and the CEEC to lessen their dependence on single markets and strengthen bilateral ties.

"This includes co-developing products, establishing joint ventures and enhancing infrastructure connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative," said Sang.

Events like the China-CEEC Expo also serve as vital platforms for showcasing technological advances and

forging cross-border business partnerships, he added.

According to the organizers, the fourth China-CEEC Expo spans 80,000 square meters this year, with the newly launched "Smart CEEC" section standing out as a key highlight. It features nearly 100 cutting-edge technologies and products from China and the CEEC, covering areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics and general aviation technology.

The CEEC is showcasing a range of innovative technologies, particularly in the fields of aviation and biomedicine, including a light aircraft from Austria, maritime safety sensors from Serbia and medical equipment from Slovakia.

Reflecting the deepening economic ties behind such exchanges, Zhejiang, a major hub for China-CEEC trade, saw robust growth in the first four months, with more than 20,000 foreign trade companies engaged in import and export activities with the CEEC, data from Hangzhou Customs showed.

In the meantime, Zhejiang's January-April total foreign trade with the CEEC reached 62.6 billion yuan (\$8.69 billion), marking an 11.6 percent year-on-year increase. The province ranked second nationwide in both overall trade volume and exports to the CEEC.

Zhejiang Sanhua Commercial Refrigeration Co Ltd, a Shaoxing, Zhejiang-based manufacturer of intelligent control components for commercial and industrial refrigeration, saw its exports to the CEEC exceed 70 million yuan between January and April, a year-on-year increase of nearly 40 percent.

"Thanks to the continued advancement of cooperation between China and the CEEC, we have built up a solid customer base in countries like Poland, Slovakia and Hungary," said Wang Chunlan, a manager at the company's foreign trade unit.

According to data from Hangzhou Customs, Zhejiang exported 30.81 billion yuan worth of electromechanical products to the CEEC in the first four months, soaring 15.8 percent year-on-year, and accounting for 54.2 percent of the province's total exports to the region.

SAIC Maxus launches RV exports

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn

In the high-tech zone of Liyang under Changzhou, Jiangsu province, SAIC Maxus Automotive RV Tech Co's production base buzzes with activity as an automated assembly line efficiently puts together motorhomes.

The company's self-propelled motorhomes have recently made their way to Australia, marking China's inaugural large-scale export of such vehicles.

Back in 2017, SAIC Maxus made a hefty investment of 1.7 billion yuan (\$236 million) to establish the country's premier customized recreational vehicle (RV) research and production hub. With over 600 million yuan poured into research and development, the company has nurtured a workforce of more than 700 specialized professionals.

Breaking through the self-imposed barriers from chassis design to overall vehicle manufacturing, the product range of SAIC Maxus now spans Type B, Type C, pickup RVs and trailer models.

While RV culture boasts a centu-

ry-old legacy in Europe and the United States, it remains a niche sector in China.

Prior to 2010, the Chinese RV market heavily relied on imports, with domestic RVs primarily centered around modifications and lacking independent R&D capabilities.

Yang Weisong, product delivery director of SAIC Maxus, emphasized the company's commitment to aligning with Australian market regulations and user needs during the product development phase.

Yang said the focus has been on achieving "design compliance" from the outset, rather than retrofitting post-production.

Following six months of intensive research, numerous visits to campsites and dealers, and participation in five car show exchanges, the company has seamlessly integrated Chinese smart technology and energy management advantages into its products.

The company's global approach ensures a supply chain, certification and after-sales service network with a global reach, promising a hassle-free experience for customers.

Moreover, in adherence with Australian and New Zealand regulations, over 50 specialized certification tests were conducted on exported RVs, leading to adjustments in chassis, upper installations and other system designs to meet compliance standards.

By collaborating with certified Australian engineers and obtaining full vehicle compliance certification through the ROVER system, SAIC Maxus maintains strict controls throughout the entire process.

Leveraging its existing network of over 100 service points in Australia, the company has laid out parts and established an after-sales network well in advance.

"In the future, the market outlook of the Chinese RV sector is still considerable," said Yang. "Taking Australia as an example, the number of RVs in Australia exceeds 400,000 with an annual addition of around 50,000 units, providing a stable and continuous growth market base."

Yang added that Australia and New Zealand have a mature campsite network and RV support service system, which create a high-quality environment for RV use.

"The opportunities for Chinese brands are enormous," he said. "Chinese RV products have shown significant technological advantages, especially in areas such as intelligence and energy management."

"It is expected that in the next three-five years, the market share of Chinese brands in the Australian market will rapidly increase, gradually entering mainstream markets."

Liyang's commercial department has played an important role in nurturing a conducive business environment for enterprises venturing into the global market. By providing policy guidance, financial support, exhibition organization, risk mitigation, streamlined export processes and reduced overseas operating costs, Liyang has paved the way for companies to expand their horizons. Although not a traditional vehicle hub, Liyang has leveraged the mature supply chain of the Yangtze River Delta region and its supportive policies to establish an RV industry cluster.

Dai Yongzhi, president of the Changzhou Automobile Circulation Association, said that in the future, the Chinese RV sector may draw on the experience of new energy vehicles to go global.

Guo Jun contributed to this story.

New deal with ASEAN to lift free trade

Seen expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in emerging sectors

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The expected implementation of the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement later this year will send a strong signal to the world in support of free trade and open cooperation, the Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday.

Commerce and trade ministers from China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations jointly announced on Tuesday the official conclusion of talks for this upgraded free trade deal via an online meeting, said the ministry in a statement.

China and the 10 ASEAN member states will expedite their respective domestic administrative and legislative procedures and work toward formally signing the upgraded protocol by the end of this year, said the statement.

At a time when global trade is facing major challenges, the successful conclusion of negotiations between the two sides reflects the broader trend toward openness and cooperation. It underscores the resilience of free trade and brings greater certainty to both regional and global economic landscapes, said the MOC.

China and ASEAN launched negotiations for the upgraded trade deal in 2022. The two sides jointly declared the substantial conclusion of the negotiations in Vientiane, Laos, in October 2024. Following this development, both sides accelerated consultations on the remaining provisions of the upgraded protocol and the chapter on the digital economy.

Huo Jianguo, a researcher at the China Society for World Trade Organization Studies, said this move sends a strong message against unilateralism and protectionism, reaffirming both sides' commitment to free trade and open cooperation.

By jointly advancing supply chain resilience and connectivity, the upgraded agreement offers a powerful response to external attempts at "decoupling" and supply chain disruptions, while promoting greater synergy across

regional industrial and supply networks, said Huo.

Version 3.0 covers nine areas, encompassing both existing fields under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement and emerging sectors with significant potential for cooperation, including the digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, trade facilitation, and economic and technical cooperation, the ministry added.

Building on the foundations of the existing China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, these advancements significantly expand mutually beneficial cooperation in emerging sectors, enhance alignment in standards and regulations, and promote trade facilitation and inclusive development, said Cai Hongbo, director of the Free Trade Zone Research Center at Beijing Normal University.

The upgrade marks a pioneering step toward deeper regional economic integration and reinforces ongoing collaboration between China and ASEAN across industrial and supply chains, said Cai.

In the first four months, ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner, with total trade between the two sides reaching 2.38 trillion yuan (\$329.62 billion), up 9.2 percent year-on-year, accounting for 16.8 percent of China's total foreign trade value, said the General Administration of Customs.

Zhejiang Sharbo Electric Appliance Co Ltd, a Ningbo, Zhejiang province-based household appliances manufacturer, welcomed the conclusion of the version 3.0 negotiations as an encouraging development, according to information provided by Ningbo Customs.

"In the past, our exports were primarily focused on traditional markets like Europe and the United States. However, with rising risks of tariff barriers, we have been actively exploring emerging markets. Our air conditioners have already gained a foothold in ASEAN markets such as Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia," said Gao Feiji, the company's foreign trade director.

Health check



The Yuanping Track Division of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd recently arranged for doctors to offer medical advice and basic checkups for employees at Xinzhou, Yuanping and Lingqiu stations. The proactive move is meant to help prevent injuries and illnesses among employees. WANG KANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Wednesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.21 percent to 3387.57 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.14 percent higher at 10294.22 points. The combined turnover of these two indexes stood at about 1.17 trillion yuan (\$162.64 billion), flat from the previous trading day. The ChiNext Index, tracking China's Nasdaq-style board of growth enterprises, gained 0.83 percent

to close at 2065.39 points.

Tax revenue posts growth in April

China's tax revenue increased by 1.9 percent year-on-year in April, marking a shift from decline to growth, official data showed. In the first four months of the year, the country's tax revenue edged down 2.1 percent year-on-year while non-tax revenue increased by 7.7 percent year-on-year, according to data released by the Ministry of Finance.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

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US attempts to disparage BRI will only strengthen its bonds of connectivity

That the Belt and Road Initiative is a *bête noire* of Washington has long been apparent. But US Secretary of State Marco Rubio again expressed its animosity to the BRI while answering questions in two congressional hearings on Tuesday, in which he said that “China doesn’t do humanitarian aid, China does predatory lending — that’s what the Belt and Road Initiative does”.

Washington likes to try and create the impression that the nobility of its actions is beyond reproach. That everything it does is done in a salubrious glasshouse with full transparency. Yet in doing so, it all too often ends up throwing stones at others that crack that veneer.

Such is the case with Rubio’s smearing of the BRI which, while adhering to the familiar template established by the US for its criticism of the initiative, exposed the degree to which Washington is apprehensive about its success.

Supposedly sincere concerns about debt sustainability, transparency, environmental and social impacts, strategic motivations, and lack of reciprocity in China’s approach to infrastructure development and economic cooperation have become part and parcel of Washington’s smearing of China. That’s precisely because the initiative has proved to be such a success as a public good, enhancing connectivity and promoting economic cooperation across Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond to Latin America.

While the US seeks to disparage the BRI, one cannot help but sense that it is spitting out sour grapes. Perhaps if the US had shown the vision and foresight to spend even a fraction of the \$8 billion it spent on its post-9/11 military adventurism on developing infrastructure in the Global South, it would be the one reaping the plaudits for extending a helping hand and boosting global infrastructure connectivity, as well as the tangible rewards of cooperation.

Since its beginnings as part of China’s neighborhood diplomacy, with the aim of reviving the ancient trade routes with countries in its vicinity, the scope and ambition of the BRI have steadily grown. Today, it has developed into the largest global platform for cooperation with more than 150 countries and 30 international organiza-

tions participating, and institutional frameworks established for debt sustainability and the transition to green development.

While giving voice to Washington’s smearing of the BRI, Rubio had to swallow the fact that “trade not aid is the pillar of US policy in Africa”, as his top Africa official Troy Fitrell said in a speech last week in Abidjan. With that transactional inducement, the US is cutting nearly all its foreign aid, with sub-Saharan Africa being the most affected region, losing billions of dollars in funding that previously supported health, humanitarian and development programs. A New York Times article outlined some of the likely consequences of the move, which include mass famine in Sudan, the collapse of HIV treatment programs in countries such as South Africa, and millions of additional malaria and polio cases.

In the 10-year period to the end of 2022, China’s trade with economies partnering with it under the framework of BRI reached \$19.1 trillion. But as well as trade, China’s support for countries participating in the initiative has been comprehensive and multifaceted, aligned with the principle of “planning together, building together and benefiting together”. Given the size of the projects and their effects, the BRI’s infrastructure projects have been the most prominent areas of China’s development assistance which, unlike the traditional Western donor-recipient model, takes the form of capacity-building partnerships in such forms as grants and interest-free loans for schools and hospitals, and disaster relief work. It also provides training programs in fields such as agriculture, public health and governance, with over 500,000 officials and technicians having been trained in China since 2013.

Under these circumstances, it is unfortunate that the US continues to try and peddle misunderstandings and mistrust about China’s contributions to global development. Especially when the US has enshrined the priorities of its own interests in almost everything it does through the administration’s “America First” doctrine.

China continues to contribute its wisdom and solutions for the building of a more just and fairer world order, in which all countries have equal opportunities for development.

Focus on amicable, secure neighborhood

Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar’s three-day visit to China, which started on Monday, apparently aims to reaffirm that his country’s relations with China are ironclad amid the high tensions between Pakistan and India.

In his meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and other Chinese officials on Tuesday, Dar thanked China for its firm support for Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and vowed to further deepen the all-weather strategic partnership between China and Pakistan.

The Chinese side reiterated that it has always taken China-Pakistan relations as a diplomatic priority and is willing to deepen cooperation and promote the building of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

Despite this, those thinking Islamabad is trying to leverage its relations with Beijing to steer the situation in South Asia so that it develops in its favor are misreading the situation.

That Wang stressed China will, as always, firmly support Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity in his meeting with Dar does not mean it has altered its objective and just stance.

As Wang said, China welcomes and supports Pakistan and India in properly handling their differences through dialogue, achieving a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and seeking a fundamental resolving of their differences. This is in the fundamental and long-term interests of both sides, conducive to regional peace and stability, and also the general expectations of the international community.

Dar’s visit goes far beyond bilateral economic scope, as strengthening regional security and anti-terrorism cooperation is high on the agenda, and the core mission of his visit is to carry on the momentum of bilateral development cooperation.

During Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari’s visit to China in February, Beijing expressed its readiness to work with Islamabad to upgrade the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor cooperation, and help Pakistan consoli-

date its development foundations and unleash its development potential.

So deepening pragmatic cooperation related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is high on the agenda of Dar’s visit. During his meeting with Wang, the two sides pledged to double down on their cooperation in the fields of industry, agriculture, energy and mining, human resources development, as well as counter-terrorism and security.

The development of China-Pakistan relations is to promote the common development of the two nations and bring tangible benefits to the two peoples. It does not target any third party, and will help fill in the development gap of the region, which is necessary to eliminate the soil for terrorism, the spark for the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

China adheres to the principle of good-neighborliness and friendship, supports a comprehensive ceasefire, and is willing to provide assistance in maintaining regional stability.

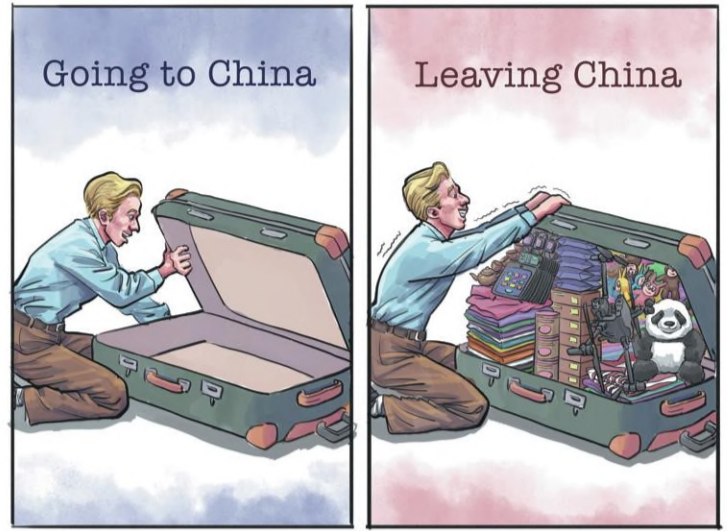
India and Pakistan are both important neighbors of China, neighbors that cannot move away from each other. In that sense, it is good to see that Pakistan and India have agreed to withdraw troop reinforcements deployed during their recent conflict back to their peacetime positions by the end of May.

But it should also be seen that the two sides still lack basic political mutual trust, and the prevalent jingoism in India is not conducive to easing the tensions.

China strongly urges both India and Pakistan to act in the interest of peace and stability, exercise calm and restraint, and take concrete actions to consolidate the ceasefire. They should create more favorable conditions for political settlement of their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from any action that could further escalate tensions.

Allowing the tensions to escalate between two nuclear countries in a region that is home to more than 2 billion people will only risk disaster for the whole world. Both countries should realize that terrorism is a common enemy of humanity, and regional chaos will benefit no country.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Shanghai Spirit guides dream of achieving sustainable prosperity

The fight against poverty remains a shared aspiration for Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states. The 2025 SCO Forum on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, which opened on Tuesday in Xi’an, Shaanxi province, further solidified the willingness of the member states to enhance policy communication, share poverty reduction experience and deepen practical cooperation.

Around 240 participants, including 120 guests from Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Cambodia, attended the forum. China’s achievement in eradicating absolute poverty, a decade ahead of the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, stands as a testament to the effectiveness of its governance model and development philosophy.

According to official data, 98.99 million residents in China’s rural areas were lifted out of poverty, and 832 poverty-stricken counties and 128,000 impoverished villages were removed from the poverty list in 2021. China’s poverty reduction experience offers significant inspiration for SCO member states.

As the rotating chair of the SCO this year, China is ready to help more countries explore poverty reduction and sustainable development paths that suit their national conditions. The country has not only rewritten its own history but also contributed

to global poverty reduction efforts.

China’s poverty reduction strategy, rooted in targeted measures and systemic reforms, offers valuable lessons. By integrating poverty alleviation into broader development plans, China has ensured that no one was left behind, whether through industrial development, education empowerment or social welfare enhancements. International observers have noted that China’s success underscores the importance of strong institutional frameworks and adaptive policymaking.

China has actively shared its expertise within the SCO community. The China-Uzbekistan subcommittee on poverty reduction cooperation that came up during the China-Central Asia Summit in 2023 is the first subcommittee on poverty reduction that China established with other countries at the governmental level. Training programs and workshops on poverty reduction have become vital platforms for SCO officials.

At its core, poverty is a development issue, and the SCO’s focus on sustainable growth aligns with this understanding. As 2025 is designated as the Year of Sustainable Development for the SCO, the bloc has prioritized economic resilience and inclusive progress. China’s commitment to high-quality Belt and Road cooperation has further amplified regional integration, with trade

between China and other SCO member states reaching a historic \$890 billion in 2024.

From the influx of SCO agricultural products into the Chinese markets to the training of agricultural specialists from SCO members, tangible outcomes demonstrate the potential of shared prosperity.

The SCO’s progress in poverty reduction and sustainability reflects the enduring spirit of mutual trust and win-win cooperation. China’s approach, which combines domestic success with international solidarity, exemplifies the vision of “leaving no country behind”. As the SCO enters a new phase of high-quality development, the emphasis on technology, equitable partnerships and sharing of knowledge will be pivotal. By uniting under the banner of the “Shanghai Spirit”, SCO nations can harness collective strengths to address inequality, climate challenges and economic disparities.

China’s journey from poverty to prosperity is not an isolated narrative but an invitation for global collaboration. As SCO countries continue to draw inspiration from China’s model, the path toward a poverty-free future becomes increasingly attainable. The task ahead is to translate lessons into localized strategies, ensuring that development is not a privilege but a universal right.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Gaza an inalienable part of Palestinian territory

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country would allow a “basic amount of food” to enter Gaza after an 11-week-long blockade, but it planned to take “control of all of Gaza”. Israel will continue the war until “total victory is achieved”, he said.

This indicates a likely further worsening of the situation in the Palestinian enclave that is home to 2.1 million Palestinians who have suffered from the conflict and hunger since October 2023.

Rejecting international calls for a ceasefire, the Israeli army has pursued an offensive against Gaza ever since, killing nearly 53,500 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to Palestinian sources.

Notably, one day before Netanyahu’s statement, the US administration indicated it is working on a plan to permanently relocate up to 1 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya, according to US media reports. The plan is under serious consideration as the administration has discussed it with Libya’s leadership, two people with direct knowledge of the plans and a former US official told NBC News.

In exchange for the resettling of Palestinians, the administration would apparently release to Libya billions of dollars of funds that the US froze more than a decade ago.

No final agreement has been reached, and Israel has been kept

informed of the administration’s discussions, the same sources said. So people have enough reason to believe Tel Aviv’s latest attempt to tighten its grip on Gaza and the reported US plan are interrelated.

Tel Aviv’s announcement that it will continue its military operations has been widely condemned, even by the US’ allies. The United Kingdom, France, and Canada all issued stern warnings to Israel on Monday, calling for an immediate cessation of military operations in Gaza and the lifting of restrictions on humanitarian aid or face “further concrete actions”.

“We strongly oppose the expansion of Israel’s military operations in Gaza. The level of human suffering in Gaza is intolerable. Yesterday’s announcement that Israel will allow a basic quantity of food into Gaza is wholly inadequate,” the joint statement said.

The three nations also accused Israel of denying vital humanitarian assistance, warning that such actions “risk breaching International Humanitarian Law”.

The Arab League Summit in Baghdad last week also strongly opposed Israel further escalating the tensions in Gaza.

But in a statement issued late on Monday, Netanyahu claimed that the UK-France-Canada joint call for halting the Israeli war on Gaza is “offering a huge prize” for what he called “the genocidal attack” on Israel in

October 2023.

But in fact it is Israel that faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its actions.

Behind the Gaza conflict is the delay in resolving the question of Palestine, and the question of Palestine has always been at the core of the Middle East issue, so until the two-state solution is implemented, the logic of repaying grievance with grievance will not cease and the cycle of violence will not end.

China calls on all parties to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders and to admit Palestine as a full member state of the United Nations.

Israel should stop using retaliation for the Hamas attack in October 2023 as a cover for its plan to annex the Gaza Strip, which is a Palestinian homeland and a part of Palestinian territory.

The US has actually brokered a ceasefire agreement and led the charting of the course for the follow-up negotiations. These diplomatic efforts should continue.

In the process, the principle of “Palestinians governing Palestine” should be upheld in the post-war governance of Gaza in line with the two-state solution with an ultimate goal of achieving peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel, as well as long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC4A 3DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1400 Broadway, Suite 2000,
New York, NY 10018
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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One planet, all species living in harmony

Nature is the foundation of civilization and humanity's most powerful ally. From the air we breathe to the food we eat, our lives are inextricably linked with the natural world, and by extension, all other living things which, like us, depend on it for survival.

Natural habitats are not just home to countless species critical to maintaining the delicate balance of the planet's ecosystems, but also act as carbon sinks, protecting us against climate change. Forests alone absorb nearly 16 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, while regulating global temperatures.

However, currently, around the world, from the deepest oceans to the tallest mountains, nature is under immense threat. Biodiversity is in serious decline, with species going extinct at a faster rate than any time in history.

Against this backdrop, the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework — agreed to at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022 under China's presidency — paved a path to better safeguard the planet and promote coexistence with nature. It set 23 specific targets to be achieved by 2030, alongside four long-term objectives for 2050.

While some progress has been made toward achieving these goals, there is still much work to be done. Since 2020, for example, protected areas have increased by less than 0.5 percent globally. This leaves a land area roughly the size of Brazil and Australia combined, and at sea an area larger than the Indian Ocean, to be designated in order to meet the global target of protecting 30 percent of terrestrial, marine and freshwater spaces by 2030.

Sustainably protecting the world's increasingly fragile ecosystems will require significantly enhanced efforts and accelerated actions. To this end, China's continued pursuit of an "ecological civilization" has been an important commitment. Indeed, during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China has made significant strides by improving its natural resource management, establishing conservation systems, and strengthening legislation for protected areas, which currently account for 18 percent of the country's landmass.

Moving ahead, it will be critical to accelerate momentum by building on this work and further expanding conservation efforts to increasingly larger areas to reach the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's 30 percent target.

In doing this, we must recognize that biodiversity conservation goes hand in hand with climate action as two sides of the same coin. Healthy ecosystems provide some of our most effective nature-based solutions for both climate adaptation and reducing emissions. China's announcement that its new national climate action plan to be submitted later this year will include all sectors of the economy and all gases is therefore a critical step, and presents an opportunity to synthesize efforts by including biodiversity as a key priority.

Another way to do this is through financing. Currently, there is a \$700 billion annual funding gap to protect and restore nature. A nature-positive economy could generate more than \$10 trillion in annual business value and create 395 million jobs by 2030. Realizing this, however, will require a reorientation of financial systems away from siloed funding vehicles, and toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals — our global blueprint to ensure the future of both humans and the planet. By adopting integrated financing mechanisms and approaches that comprehensively tackle development challenges, increasing resources can be unlocked for broader impact.

Between 2022 and 2024, the UN Development Programme promoted more than \$870 billion in investments toward the SDGs. In particular, our SDG Investor Maps and SDG Impact Standards have helped identify areas where investment opportunities align with sustainable development needs, and ensure that such investments are clearly linked to measurable social and environmental outcomes.

Similarly, the Kunming Biodiversity Fund announced by China in 2021, and launched last year, provides an international financing vehicle for developing countries

to access additional funding needed to advance conservation efforts.

However, further accelerating financing at the speed and scale needed will require global, collective efforts. To that end, the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in June will be a critical opportunity to unite countries around the world in reforming domestic and international financing and catalyzing greater investments toward sustainability. It will also be an opportunity for large creditor countries to consider debt repurposing to free up more resources for the protection of nature.

Finally, with the rapid emergence of revolutionary new technologies and cutting-edge digital tools, it will be critical to harness the transformative potential of these advancements and direct them toward development challenges, including biodiversity protection. Innovations like artificial intelligence offer ways to process vast amounts of environmental data, identify critical patterns and break down silos that have traditionally hindered conservation. UNDP has support-

ed more than 50 countries in using AI to align national policies with global biodiversity goals. At UNDP, we look forward to continue building on our decades-long partnership with China in strengthening biodiversity protection to advance progress on the SDGs and promote harmony with nature.

We can still protect the planet through meaningful, decisive action, but it must happen now, and it must happen collectively. The stakes have never been higher, but together we can and must turn ambition into impact to create a more inclusive and sustainable future for all life on Earth — one in which nature and humanity will not only coexist, but also thrive.

The author is the UNDP resident representative in China.

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



LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

Zhao Liang

China emerges as global biodiversity champion

China has consolidated its position as a global leader in biodiversity conservation by taking bold and effective actions.

From better protecting endangered species and ecosystems to helping shape landmark global environmental, including biodiversity, agreements, China's achievements underscore its unwavering commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and its vision of building an ecological civilization.

Central to China's success is its pivotal role in uniting more than 190 parties to adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework during the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference. This groundbreaking agreement set the ambitious target of protecting 30 percent of the planet's land and oceans by 2030, marking a milestone in global environmental and ecological governance.

The framework's importance lies in its integrated approach, which goes beyond traditional conservation practices to add new dimensions such as biodiversity recovery, sustainable production and consumption, and climate change governance into the scope of action, aligned with China's "harmony with nature" philosophy.

Domestically, China's "ecological civilization" has emerged as a transformative model for balancing ecological protection and sustainable development, demarcating more than 30 percent of its terrestrial territory as ecologically critical zones. The ECRs' emphasis on real-time monitoring via satellite remote sensing and AI-driven governance platforms sets a

China has launched the Global Biodiversity Framework Action Initiative, too, expediting the implementation of the GBF worldwide.

new standard for transparency and enforcement, narrowing the gaps in global ecological conservation. It not only propels China's progress toward the 30x30 target but also positions the country as a leader in redefining ecological governance.

Besides, China has transformed its ecological commitments into tangible outcomes through large-scale, science-driven initiatives. The Natural Forest Protection Program, launched in 1998, has safeguarded extensive natural forest areas. By banning commercial logging in key regions and launching reforestation campaigns, the program has reversed deforestation trends, reduced soil erosion and lowered annual desertification rates. These efforts have not only restored habitats for endangered species such as the giant panda and crested ibis but also enhanced carbon sequestration, contributing to climate mitigation.

Complementing these efforts, the Grain for Green Program has restored substantial landscapes since 1999 to their original state, creating vast green corridors reconnecting fragmented ecosystems. And recent shifts toward planting mixed-species forests — replacing monoculture plantations — have boosted biodiversity while improving

soil fertility and water retention in pilot regions.

China's protected area system now covers 18 percent of its land and protects more than 90 percent of terrestrial ecosystem types, which include protected areas for flagship species such as the giant panda in collaboration with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park exemplifies this success: The number of Amur tigers increased to 70 in 2023, up 50 percent since 2020, while Amur leopards — once teetering on extinction — now number 80.

In the Sanjiangyuan National Park, the "Water Tower of Asia", the Tibetan antelope population has rebounded, prompting the International Union for Conservation of Nature to downgrade their status from "endangered" to "near threatened". This revival is attributed to habitat restoration, anti-poaching patrolling teams, and community-led conservation programs that incentivize herders to protect wildlife.

China has made great strides in addressing agricultural issues, one of the primary reasons for the loss of biodiversity, by leveraging comprehensive policies and effective practices. The country has drastically reduced pesticide and fertilizer use, with pesticide use decreasing by 31.4 percent from 2013 to 2021 and fertilizer use peaking in 2015. China is now the world's fourth largest organic agriculture producer.

As the world's largest importer of agricultural products, China has been engaging in the conservation of global tropical rainforests by improving the transparency and sustainability of its supply chains in partnership with international organizations such as the

WWF. These efforts align with global biodiversity targets, demonstrating China's commitment to balancing agricultural productivity with ecological health.

Globally, China's Kunming Biodiversity Fund, backed by an initial pledge of 1.5 billion yuan (\$207.86 million), has become a cornerstone of South-South cooperation. It has approved or set aside in 2024 a total of \$202 million for 40 projects in 41 countries and 36 percent of the total resources have been programmed for LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and SIDS (Small Island Developing States). China has launched the Global Biodiversity Framework Action Initiative, too, expediting the implementation of the GBF worldwide.

As the 2030 deadline for global biodiversity targets approaches, China's vision of ecological civilization — prioritizing harmony between humans and nature — stands as a beacon of hope. From restoring forests that buffer against climate disasters to helping revive once endangered species' populations, China's contributions to global environmental protection and biodiversity conservation demonstrate that environmental stewardship and sustainable development are not competing goals but mutually reinforcing imperatives. In an era of escalating ecological crises, China's story shows that collective action, guided by policy and scientific approach, can forge a path toward a thriving planet.

The author is the priority project coordinator for Policy Advocacy and Green Finance at the WWF, China.

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

Pasja Plevnik

EU, US on the road to 'rivals and partners'

It has become fashionable to say the European Union is collapsing. It is true that the EU is facing significant pressure due to the change in the nature of its relationship with the United States and the re-arrangement of the global balance of power, but that does not signify the beginning of the end for its global political influence nor does it mean the EU economy is in disarray.

The most pressing risk the EU faces is not whether it will remain a global power, but what kind of power it will become given the US' intent to overhaul the EU-US trade and military relations. US President Donald Trump's aim to reduce cooperation with the EU may have a historical dimension, but Trump's opinion on the issue can change overnight or even lead to a free trade agreement between Washington and Brussels.

For the EU, like for any other economy, it is painful to guess what Washington would do tomorrow, in order to expand US trade and boost its manufacturing economy. The EU's response to the US' "Liberation Day" tariffs has highlighted the unity among the EU member states and respect for the bloc's rules. Among the most serious problems facing the EU is the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has exposed the differences within and outside the bloc and raised the cost of living in Europe.

The EU leadership's performance vis-à-vis the Russia-Ukraine conflict has raised serious questions despite being influenced, many a time, by US pressure. While the EU leadership alone cannot resolve the geopolitical crisis in Europe, the US administration has created a weird situation for the bloc by negotiating peace with Moscow. If Washington continues to "welcome all efforts that lead to the end of the conflict in Ukraine", it would create a real opportunity for the EU to get back to the path of peace.

But the EU is not humbled by its failure. Instead, it is considering how best to regroup to fight with Russia "for as long as it takes". The EU leadership's intention to prolong the conflict may be a ploy to prevent discussions on its poor geopolitical judgments and decisions in Eastern Europe.

Some other EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, which have been calling for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the battlefield and strengthened their strategic position by taking advantage of their transatlantic partnership during the former Joe Biden administration, now see the US' "pursuit of peace" in the EU as a betrayal of the EU.

Some European politicians and observers think the US-Ukraine minerals (including rare earths) deal is not in the EU's interest, because the bloc, too, is interested in pursuing critical raw-material deals with resource-rich Ukraine, so as to expedite its green and digital transition. Now that Ukraine has struck a deal to supply minerals including rare earths to the US, it might become an empty shell if it joins the EU in 2030 as some claim.

The US and the EU have other differences as well. For instance, the EU does not share the current US administration's views on climate change, immigration, and its intention to acquire Greenland, Canada and the Panama Canal. Relations between the two sides have deteriorated to such an extent that some European airlines are now reporting a decline in transatlantic bookings, especially on flights from Europe to the US.

In such circumstances, the EU should give a strategic response to the White House, as their current relationship is that of "rivals and partners". Not surprisingly, in its relations with the US, the EU is now feeling what China has been experiencing in its relations with the US for some time.

For the EU, it may appear unthinkable, but the US is capable of drawing a dividing line through the center of the Western world. The crisis in the transatlantic partnership, which aptly defines the relationship between the US and the EU, has gone beyond the disagreements over trade and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The crisis is not a one-off phenomenon. Remember the "pivot to Asia" strategy of former US president Barack Obama — in the US' "grand strategy", Europe is behind Asia, and the current US administration has intensified that strategy.

The EU tends to downplay the strategic implications of the US' policy toward the EU, including the bloc's stability and its long military partnership, cultural affinity with and political trust in the US. The EU has sacrificed a lot to build a partnership with the US. That's why it finds it difficult to accept that US-EU relations have soured. It has given the US many concessions, broken many promises to build an independent security shield and weakened multilateralism within the bloc by supporting the US' unipolar strategy.

Although the fact that the US resorts to realpolitik has been exposed to a great extent, the EU continues to stick to its perception of the US as an ally and a permanent military and economic leader of the world.

The author, founder and president of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia, contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Not surprisingly, in its relations with the US, the EU is now feeling what China has been experiencing in its relations with the US for some time.

GLOBAL VIEWS

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Winds of change

In response to US tariffs, the EU should improve its relations with the rest of the world

In recent years, European leaders have often claimed that China has been pursuing its political interests too assertively. They allege that China has been trying to reshape the existing rules-based international order, with dire consequences for European and global security. Europe's economic dependence on China has also grown in recent years

and some European leaders therefore called for de-risking from China.

For eight consecutive years, from 2016 to 2023, China was Germany's largest partner in terms of trade in goods. When it emerged earlier this year that the United States replaced China in this position in 2024, a sigh of relief could be heard in political circles in Berlin. At last, the de-risking recommended in the German government's 2023 strategy on China had apparently produced the "desired result".

But the relief was short-lived. On April 2, the so-called Liberation Day, the US administration set out to upend the international trade order that had served the world, including the US, so well for decades. European leaders were quick to criticize the tariffs announced — and temporarily suspended since — by the US. But one might pause for a moment to consider what their reaction would have been if — just imagine — it had been China doing something remotely similar. The outcry in Brussels is easy to imagine.

Now it is not China that is threatening the global economy, but the US. The new coalition in Germany was apparently ill-prepared for this. In its coalition agreement, negotiated in April and signed in May, it states that the transatlantic alliance with the US is a "great success story for both sides" that must be continued "under the new conditions". Regarding trade and investment relations with China, the coalition proclaims that it will reduce unilateral dependencies and pursue a policy of de-risking. Given the chaos currently emanating from Washington, this makes for awkward reading: Germany would clearly be better advised to reduce its unilateral dependence on the US and build on the success of its relations with China.

European politicians cannot even claim to have been surprised by this development. It has been well known for years that Europe, and especially Ger-

many, has been overly dependent on the US for its exports of goods, especially automobiles. The same is true of Europe's dependence on the US for digital services and, most importantly, military security. The US administration has repeatedly let it be known that it sees tariffs as a panacea for the US economy, and that good relations with its partners in NATO and the EU are not among its priorities. But apparently few politicians in Europe took it seriously.

German companies, however, were more cautious: While EU flows of foreign direct investment to China have declined in recent years, German companies have continued to invest record amounts to improve their chances in the Chinese market. Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen announced further investments, as did German chemical giant BASF and many smaller "hidden champions". German companies continue to take a long-term "in China, for China" perspective, successfully localizing production and innovation to adapt to the growing Chinese economy. In doing so, they are preparing to compete with Chinese companies in the Chinese market and, perhaps more importantly, in third country markets in the Global South.

Especially after the "Liberation Day" tariffs, Europe will have to look out for itself by improving its trade relations with the rest of the world, in particular with China. In contrast to Washington's disruptive behavior, Beijing presents an image of stability, modernity, predictability and continued growth.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has shown more wisdom than the German coalition. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, she declared: "2025 marks 50 years of our union's diplomatic relations with China. I see it as an opportunity to engage and deepen our relationship with China, and where possible, even to expand our trade and investment ties." Ursula von der Leyen and Chinese Premier Li Qiang recently agreed to hold an EU-China summit in July.

The big question now is whether the EU and China can bridge their many differences to jointly resist the US' tariffs. While some concerns persist regarding trade practices and market openness, both Europe and China have expressed a commitment to constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. The Brussels-based think tank Bruegel recently concluded that fears of trade diversion from China are

probably overblown. There are simply not that many Chinese products exported to the US that would compete with European products. Tellingly, in April 2025, Chinese exports to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations rose by 20.8 percent year-on-year — but Chinese exports to the EU just by 8.3 percent.

In his first government declaration on May 14, the new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pointed out that China will remain an important partner for Germany and the EU for global issues and the economy. To promote long-term mutual benefit, Europe and China should therefore consider a cooperative understanding that ensures open markets on both sides and addresses concerns over potential trade realignments resulting from recent geopolitical disruption: Brussels removes its tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, while Beijing withdraws the trade cases it recently launched against EU products. Both open even further to investment from the other. Finally, the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, agreed between Chinese and European leaders in 2020, but not ratified by the EU, should be revived.

It may be more challenging for Europe and China to resolve some divisive political issues, but recent developments signal a mutual willingness to enhance dialogue and cooperation. China's decision to lift sanctions on five members of the European Parliament is a welcome step toward strengthening political dialogue; it should be followed by a similar initiative on the part of the Europeans. While challenges remain in areas such as human rights issues and differing perspectives on the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, both sides should reaffirm their shared commitment to uphold the principles of the UN Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, including respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

The author is a former member of the German Foreign Service, an advisory professor at Tongji University and a visiting scholar at the Center for Cultural Studies on Science and Technology in China at Technical University of Berlin. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

FAJAR HIRAWAN

Global South steps forward

'America First' accelerating strategic reorientation away from dependency on US-led systems

Amid the rapidly evolving global landscape, the traditional dominance of Western-led institutions is giving way to a more diversified multipolar order. The Global South — spanning Asia, Africa and Latin America — is increasingly asserting itself as a collective force in shaping global governance, trade and development norms. With rising economic clout, expanding regional blocs and a renewed focus on

strategic autonomy, these nations are no longer passive participants in global affairs. Instead, they are crafting alternative frameworks rooted in equitable cooperation and resilient multilateralism.

Against this backdrop, the return of Donald Trump to the White House in 2025 signals a renewed emphasis on the "America First" doctrine — albeit in a world far more prepared to push back. While the administration initially revived hard-line rhetoric and protectionist impulses, including a proposed blanket tariff on Chinese imports, recent developments suggest a more measured trajectory. Both Washington and Beijing appear to be recalibrating. Rather than escalating into a full-blown trade war, the current dynamic points toward guarded negotiation, supply chain diversification and regional realignment — particularly in the Asia-Pacific region — where many Global South economies are emerging as pivotal stakeholders in the reshaping of global trade flows.

This shift in global dynamics has created space for the Global South to assert itself more cohesively. The expansion of BRICS — welcoming Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates as members — marks a turning point in the international order. Representing nearly half the world's population and over one-third of global output (based on purchasing power parity), the enlarged BRICS grouping has now surpassed the G7 on several economic indicators.

This expanded bloc is more than symbolic. It is actively pushing for structural reform of global institutions. Priorities include increasing the influence of developing economies in the International Monetary Fund and advocating for greater inclusivity within the United Nations — long-standing goals that reflect deep-seated frustrations with the Western-centric architecture of post-war global governance.

Financial sovereignty is also central to this effort. The BRICS-led New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, is accelerating its shift toward issuing loans in national cur-

rencies to shield members from US dollar volatility. A new blockchain-based cross-border payment platform is also under development, aimed at reducing reliance on Western-dominated financial infrastructure such as SWIFT and mitigating the geopolitical weaponization of monetary tools.

Simultaneously, regionalism in Asia has gained new momentum through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Encompassing 15 Asia-Pacific economies — including China, the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand — the RCEP now accounts for about 30 percent of the global GDP and population. For countries, such as Indonesia, this partnership represents not only a practical trade mechanism but a signal of strategic reorientation away from dependency on US-led systems. The RCEP's role in tariff reduction, regulatory alignment and supply chain stabilization makes it a linchpin of regional resilience amid mounting geopolitical uncertainty.

Beyond trade, the diplomatic role of the Global South is also expanding. A notable shift occurred in 2023 when China facilitated a groundbreaking normalization of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This agreement highlighted Beijing's growing influence and the Global South's willingness to lead in conflict resolution.

Across other regions, similar momentum is building. The African Continental Free Trade Area is aimed at unlocking the potential of intra-African commerce and reduce external dependency. Meanwhile, Latin American states are reinvigorating institutions such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States to assert greater control over their regional agenda — away from the fluctuations of US policy.

At the center of this Global South resurgence are China and Indonesia — two nations whose visions of partnership and pragmatism are shaping a multipolar era. China's Belt and Road Initiative, with projects now spanning over 150 countries, continues to set the pace for infrastructure-led development. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, operational since 2023, stands as a flagship of Sino-Indonesian cooperation and a tangible symbol of "infrastructure diplomacy".

Indonesia, led since October 2024 by President Prabowo Subianto, has adopted an "active non-alignment" policy, signaling its intent to engage with all major powers without becoming ensnared in bloc rivalry. By emphasizing ASEAN centrality, enhancing ties with both Washington and Beijing, and expanding its influence within BRICS and the Organiza-

tion of Islamic Cooperation, Jakarta is positioning itself as a critical bridge-builder in this era of multipolar diplomacy.

This geopolitical shift is not only pragmatic, it is also deeply historical. The call to respect diverse development paths resonated across the Global South, particularly in nations that still bear the legacy of colonialism and structural exclusion.

This narrative reinforces the normative foundation for a new international system — one that challenges the premise of a single dominant power and instead seeks a fairer, more balanced global order.

Still, multipolarity is not without its own difficulties. Groups such as BRICS and the RCEP encompass a wide range of political models, economic structures and national interests. Building consensus can be arduous. Moreover, pressing global issues such as climate change, digital regulation and pandemic preparedness require collective responses that transcend ideological and regional divisions.

This was evident at COP29 in 2024, where negotiations faltered over disagreements between developed and developing nations on issues of climate finance and technology transfers. Without new frameworks for coordination and trust-building, such deadlocks may become more common in an increasingly fragmented world.

Nonetheless, the trajectory is clear. The US administration's reassertion of its unilateralism has acted as a powerful catalyst, galvanizing the Global South into action. Rather than waiting on the sidelines, these countries are taking the initiative — expanding economic cooperation, forging alternative financial systems, and strengthening regional institutions.

China, as a principal architect, and Indonesia, as a strategic bridge, are playing pivotal roles in driving this transformation. Together with other emerging powers, they are forging a global compact grounded in equity, sovereignty and mutual respect. The road ahead may be complex, but the direction is clear: the era of Western-dominated global governance is giving way to a more inclusive and balanced international system, one that reflects the true diversity of the modern world.

The author is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Indonesian International Islamic University and a member of the advisory board at the Reform Initiatives, Indonesia. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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LIFE

Peking University is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Peking University Hall this year, which is not only a landmark of the prestigious institution, but also a venue for college aesthetic cultivation.

In collaboration with organizations including the National Ballet of China, the China National Symphony Orchestra, and the China National Opera House, hundreds of lectures and performances are held at the hall every year, in addition to film screenings with guided interpretation by critics and film industry insiders.

This semester, 41 performances and 15 screenings, as well as exhibitions about the hall's history and of art based on the stories of students and staff, will be organized in honor of its anniversary.

Recently, the venue hosted 75-year-old Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer and Germany's Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra that performed Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No 9* on May 13. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Yue Opera House performed traditional Yueju Opera adaptations of the classic Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and mythical story *The Butterfly Lovers* on April 25-26.

During a forum on May 13 to celebrate the anniversary and discuss the hall's future, Min Weifang, former Party secretary of Peking University, said that it has become a vital platform for liberal arts education.

For the university, it serves the internal need for aesthetic cultivation and the training of well-rounded talent, while also acting as a window to external cultural exchange, and generates a positive impact on the university's international reputation, Min adds.

A seminar attended by representatives from universities and art institutions was also held, during which topics such as how university theaters can fulfill their roles in aesthetic cultivation, integrate resources, promote innovation and tackle challenges were discussed.

Peking University has more than a century's experience in aesthetic cultivation. After taking the position as university president in 1916, prominent educator Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) started art courses and since 1917, founded research groups in fields such as painting, calligraphy, music and traditional opera.

In 1923, the university set up an orchestra, first conducted by composer Xiao Youmei (1884-1940). According to a Guangming Daily report, it was the first professional orchestra organized by Chinese musicians, and performed not only on campus but also for the wider audience. The orchestra's repertoire included symphonies from the Western classical and Romantic periods such as those written by Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as orchestral works composed by Xiao.

In the 1950s, a large timber dining hall capable of accommodating thousands was built. It gradually became the venue for major university events and academic, cultural, and recreational activities.

The current Peking University Hall is situated on the original site of the former dining hall, and has inherited its cultural role on campus.

It was completed in 1999 and officially put into use in 2000, with a



The National Ballet of China performs the classic show, *Giselle*, at Peking University Hall on April 11. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A celebration of artistic achievements

Peking University Hall looks back on 25 years of pushing the boundaries of cultural education, **Fang Aiqing** reports.



Peking University is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the operation of Peking University Hall this year. Around 5,000 artistic activities have taken place there since 2000 to enhance college aesthetic cultivation.



Left: Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer leads Germany's Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra at the hall on May 13. **Right:** Film critic and Peking University professor Dai Jinhua's guided film screening series has become one of the university's most influential cultural events.



management department specially formed to facilitate operations. It independently organizes and hosts events, with tickets sold at favorable prices, to promote art and enrich campus culture. Over the past 25 years, it has been host to around 5,000 art activities.

Since 2021, the hall has also invited artists to give experiential courses in fields like vocal and instrumental music, dancing, drama and sculpture.

Film screenings are an important part of events organized by the hall. During this April's Beijing International Film Festival, five films up for the Tiantan Award, the official competition section of the festival, were screened.

On April 30, film critic Dai Jinhua, who is also a professor at the university's Department of Chinese Language and Literature, conducted her 50th guided film screening in the past three years. This series of events has become one of the university's most influential cultural brands.

According to Zhang Yong, deputy director of the Peking University Convention Center, which oversees the hall, more than 100,000 people have attended Dai's series.

Dong Zhenting, who graduated from the university's Law School, says she has regularly attended since the first screening — Oscar-winning *Cinema Paradiso* — in 2022, and still returns.

Zheng Muhan, an undergraduate of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, says Dai's interpretations have made her realize for the first time the public value of film as a form of expression.

"These great films empower me with the confidence and courage to face life, and feed my curiosity and imagination," she says.

The 66-year-old Dai says that despite having given numerous lectures on films throughout her career, she had never shared the emotional resonance following a screening in such a large space, and under the gaze of so many eyes.

"Rather than spreading knowledge or reaching for an aesthetic pinnacle, this series is more about sharing a love for cinema. I expect these films to evoke thought and awe, and through cinema and the passion for it, I hope to inspire a love for the world, life and people," she says.

A new book based on notes from Dai's series is set to be published later this year.

At the forum on May 13, Dong Zhiyong, vice-president of Peking University, said that over the past 25 years, Peking University Hall has blazed a new path for the development of campus cultural and art centers, and provided a reference for the advancement of college aesthetic cultivation.

Hao Fenglin, first-level inspector of the department of physical, health and arts education at the Ministry of Education, expresses hope that university theaters, including the Peking University Hall, will explore and gather artistic resources to support the teaching, creation and promotion of art and culture, while deepening cooperation with both campus and external art institutions to develop replicable models.

Contact the writer at fangaqing@chinadaily.com.cn



Featuring city life, *Mad Man's Diary* is being staged at Star Theatres.

By **CHEN NAN**
chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

The stress, the noise, the disconnection — when people talk about cities nowadays, its negative aspects are often emphasized. There's a growing desire to escape and retreat into some countryside idyll, but director Li Yu pushes back against this romanticized idea of "escaping" urban life for a pastoral utopia.

"From the border of my heart, don't believe that's the answer," he says.

One evening, Li stood by the floor-to-ceiling windows of a theater, looking out at an office building. As the lights inside were twinkling, the signs outside glowed, cars moved steadily along the road, and small

restaurants lined the street. "At that moment, I felt the city was truly beautiful. I wanted to use a playful, satirical tone to re-experience and reimagine the place where we live," he says, describing the moment when the idea for a new play occurred to him.

The first thing that came to mind was *Diary of a Madman* by Nikolai Gogol. Li envisioned its famous characters rendered in a comic-book style, reflecting the absurdities and struggles of modern life.

The result is a new play, titled *Mad Man's Diary*, produced by Beijing's Star Theatres, which runs until May 30.

In Gogol's original, the protagonist is a middle-aged, low-level clerk fixated on social status, who gradu-

ally descends into madness. Through diary entries, he shares his delusions: believing that dogs can talk, and later imagining himself as the King of Spain.

Li's stage adaptation, which he both wrote and directed, is set in today's fast-paced world, in which people face constant pressure from work, relationship anxieties, and social expectations.

In this version, there are two characters: the Mad Man, an emotional chaotic dreamer who represents the imagination, fantasy, and even delusion; and Doggie, practically the other half of the same mind, who symbolizes rationality, logic, and being grounded.

The play begins in hyperrealism, portraying ordinary objects from

daily life, but as the Mad Man's fantasies take over, the stage transforms into a comic-book world, making use of stylized visuals, bold colors, exaggerated props, animation, and dramatic shifts in lighting and projection.

Li hopes to show that even in the stress and absurdity of city life, beauty and humor still exist.

In the production, the two endearing characters move through the urban landscape, facing strange and surreal situations. Together, they complain about their boss, grumble about work, chase after love, and search for happiness. They discuss dignity and equality — all through a humorous, lighthearted lens, offering the audience a cheerful and warm evening.

Directing a play is essentially about having a conversation with the audience."

Li Yu, theater director

Playing on the everyday madness



Actor Shan Guanchao in the play. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Li studied at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, and later at the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts. He is now a director at the National Theatre of China.

"Directing a play is essentially about having a conversation with the audience," Li says. "In today's world, making a comedy means offering joy, warmth, and strength, and serves as a way to vent, to complain, to relieve stress."

When did the audition? I was asked to read a small paragraph from the script, which deeply intrigued me," says actor Chi Haozhen, who plays Doggie. "The lines resonated with me, and when we performed onstage, I could feel the audience connecting. It felt like we were all sharing a common expe-

rience, united by the pressures we face in life."

As one of the most popular venues in Beijing for small-scale productions, Star Theatres is a cozy setting with only about 100 seats. This intimacy allows the audience to be fully immersed in the performance.

"We run, jump, and move around the theater with the audience just steps away. It's challenging but fascinating," says Shan Guanchao, an actor with the National Theatre of China, who plays the Mad Man.

"There's a lot of humor in the play," Shan adds. "But by the end, the audience walks away with something deeper. When they give the actors their full attention and grasp the meaning of the lines, that is the magic of theater, the emotional resonance."

LIFE

Like many families across China, Yang Xiangni, 28, spent the Spring Festival holiday this year with her loved ones, watching the country's biggest box-office sensation, *Ne Zha 2*, in the cinema.

It was Jan 29, 2025 — the first day of the Chinese New Year — and the atmosphere was electric with excitement and anticipation. For Yang, sitting in the theater alongside her family, the experience was far from ordinary.

While the audience around her was swept away by the onscreen spectacle, she had a unique connection to the opening scene — her voice, along with those of her team, echoed throughout the theater, creating a powerful, unforgettable moment.

As the screen lit up, a delicate lotus flower slowly unfurled — a visual metaphor for the film's mystical world. Sung by Yang and her collaborators, the opening song filled the theater with a hauntingly beautiful melody, evoking the ancient and otherworldly essence of the story. The melody, drawn from the traditional Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group, transported viewers to a mythical realm where history and legend intertwine.

The Grand Song, known as Dongzu Dage, is a unique and ancient form of choral music from the Dong ethnic group that primarily lives in the mountainous regions of southern China.

Unlike most traditional Chinese music, which tends to be monophonic (a single melody), the Dongzu Dage is polyphonic, with multiple independent lines sung simultaneously to create a rich, harmonious sound that captivates listeners.

Typically sung a cappella, the harmonies are complex. Singers often rely on their vocal strength and ability to harmonize in ways not commonly found in other traditional music.

In 2009, UNESCO inscribed the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

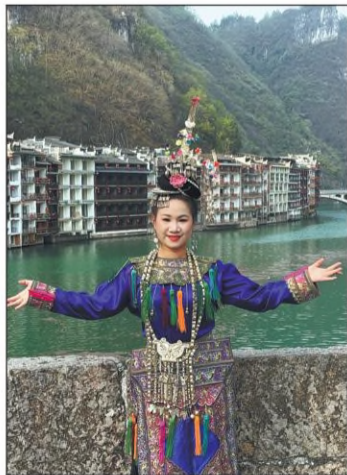
In August 2023, Yang Rui, a composer for *Ne Zha 2*, who focuses on integrating traditional music into film, came across a video on the popular Chinese social media platform Bilibili. It showcased Yang Xiangni and her team performing the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group.

"The raw, natural beauty of the performance immediately captivated me," said Yang Rui in an interview. "The music was perfect for the scene where two characters sit gracefully atop large, radiant lotus flowers. The flowers, delicate yet expansive, add a spiritual aura to the setting."

"When I heard the performance, I was shaken by the sound. I knew this was the voice I had been searching for," Yang Rui added.

Inspired by the idea of blending this ancient musical style with the film's score, Yang Rui reached out to Yang Xiangni, who is deeply involved in preserving Dong culture in her hometown of Rongjiang county, Guizhou province.

"They didn't see any visuals from



Yang Xiangni (left) and her group (middle) on stage and posing (right) for a photo. Fame came knocking as their song featured in the opening of the hit animated film *Ne Zha 2*. The success of their work has given them a wider audience and opened the door to greater opportunities.



Yang Xiangni (third from left) and members of the Wuyue Chan'ge ensemble, a music group founded by Yang in 2023. The ensemble is composed of music graduates and students from Guizhou province's schools. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Dong's Grand Song is a cultural treasure that carries the memories of our ancestors. But it is not an antique in a museum."

Yang Xiangni, musician of Dong ethnicity



the film until the recording was finished. They only had the audio and sheet music — everything else was imagined," recalls Yang Xiangni. "The singing is very different from what we're used to, and there were a lot of key changes. The singing was more difficult."

As *Ne Zha 2* became a massive hit — earning an astonishing 15.8 billion yuan (\$2.19 billion) globally since its Spring Festival debut, making it the world's fifth-highest-grossing film — Yang Xiangni and her team gained recognition, leading to more opportunities to perform nationwide, including Beijing, Suzhou and Yangcheng in Jiangsu province and Nanning in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

"For me and my team, this was more than just a professional collaboration; it was a way to preserve a cultural treasure while sharing it with a global audience," says Yang Xiangni.

Born in Sanbao village in Rongjiang county, Guizhou, home to many of the Dong ethnic group, Yang Xiangni graduated from the music school of Guizhou University in 2020. During her studies, she honed her vocal techniques and immersed herself in the Dong's ancient songs, becoming inspired to preserve her heritage.

"The Dong's Grand Song is a cultural treasure that carries the memories of our ancestors. But it is not an antique in a museum; it is a living, communicative civilization," says Yang, who made her stage debut at age 6.

After graduating, she returned to her hometown and established weekend public welfare classes to teach the Grand Song to children in her village and surrounding areas.

In 2023, she founded the ensemble Wuyue Chan'ge, a music group of graduates and students with a music major in Guizhou's schools, mostly born in the 1990s and 2000s. The group's average age is 25.

Aside from performing, the group visits Dong villages to collect ancient songs at risk of being forgotten. They also use social media to teach Dong music to a broader audience.

"I grew up listening to Dong songs. To me, they are a love that runs deep in my bones," says Luo Youmei, a member of the ensemble and graduate of the music and dance department at Guizhou Minzu University.

"When I learned that the band was dedicated to preserving and promoting Dong songs, it immediately resonated with my own aspirations. Dong songs are cultural treasures that face a crisis of inheritance gaps. I believe their preservation must honor traditional charm while embracing bold innovations."

Contact the writers at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn



Online Scan the code to watch the video.



Culturally symbolic ethnic blanket debuts at London Craft Week

LONDON — A traditional Dulong blanket from one of China's smallest ethnic groups debuted on May 12 at the opening of the China National Pavilion during the 2025 London Craft Week, where 120 handcrafted works were displayed.

The Dulong ethnic group primarily resides in the Liangjiang autonomous prefecture of Southwest China's Yunnan province. The Dulong blanket, woven by the women, is a community cultural symbol.

The exhibition in London is supported by the initiative "Mothers' Needlework", launched by China Ping An Group in partnership with the Art and Design Press.

The program aims to promote women's employment and further alleviate poverty.

In his opening remarks, Minister Zhao Fei of the Chinese embassy in the United Kingdom highlighted the shared heritage of craftsmanship from China and Britain. He noted that both countries have splendid traditional artistry, and expressed hope that this year's London Craft Week would deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries.

Qian Zhu, president and editor-in-chief of Art and Design magazine, says that Dulong blankets and their related textiles



Guests in Dulong pattern at the London event on May 12. LI YING / XINHUA

generate annual sales of approximately 500,000 yuan (\$70,000) in the UK. For an ethnic group with a population of just 7,000, the growing domestic and international recognition of Dulong ethnic textiles is a significant achievement.

David Francis, a lecturer of Curating Asian Art at SOAS at St. University in London, whose research includes ethnic communities in China's Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, says he was excited to see the textiles he encountered in China being exhibited in London.

Francis emphasizes the importance of integrating traditional crafts with contemporary design to resonate more with

contemporary audiences. The China Pavilion, themed "Tian Gong Kai Wu", is named for the renowned 17th-century Chinese encyclopedia of craftsmanship and technology, widely regarded as the world's first systematic record of China's agricultural and arts history.

Hosted at the historic Royal Mint in London, the exhibition was held on Sunday and included themed events such as "Mothers' Needlework" and "A Magical Leaf from the East", with 80 percent of the showcased works created by emerging artists.

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The self in the age of social media

Play explores the impact of networking sites on students from a teenage perspective, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

The play *Who Am I?* was performed at Beijing's Drum Tower West Theatre on Saturday and Sunday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

While the debate over use of smartphones by children continues, few adults have paused to truly listen to what the young themselves think, or how they experience the digital world.

"I have a stronger sense of presence online. In real life, because I'm not that outgoing, I don't have enough courage to make friends, even if I would like to," says Yu Min-jia, a 12-year-old performer from the DR. Youth Theatre.

"People often feel like they're free when they pick up their phones, when in fact, they have been constrained by them," says Yang Jin-sheng, a fellow performer who is 9, expressing his view.

Over the past nine months, these young actors have been exploring their thoughts on technology, expressing themselves through art and writing, and incorporating their experiences into theatrical roles under the guidance of educational theater facilitators.

The final production, *Who Am I?*, by British playwright Chris Cooper and performed by the DR. Youth Theatre, was held at Beijing's Drum Tower West Theatre on Saturday and Sunday.

A classroom confrontation sets the stage for the drama as one student challenges her teacher's authority. Criticized by the teacher and then bullied by her classmates, she pours ink on one of the bullies and flees to a parallel classroom, where she is alone, yet able to hear her classmates' inner thoughts.

Through this combination of fictional setting and realistic subject, the play takes the audience on an exploration of technology and the impact of social media on teenagers, offering insights into understanding the complex realities of young life.



Left: The production includes a personification of an AI character. **Right:** Young performers from the DR. Youth Theatre, aged between 8 and 13, acted in the play and contributed to its creation.



The play's director Chen Yuan speaks during a Q&A session after the show.

Under the guidance of director Chen Yuan, the young performers, aged between 8 and 13, were encouraged to participate in the creative process by developing their own characters, contributing writing and art to the production, and sharing their perspectives.

"I believe that 'who am I' is a question everyone has asked themselves. This philosophical question, that should be explored over an extended period of time, has become an everyday question due

to the prevalence of social media," Chen says.

Chen, who is also a facilitator at Drama Rainbow Education, the organization producing the play, conducted one-on-one conversations with the young members and their parents before its launch last September.

From these discussions, she learned that many students were experiencing subtle forms of cyberbullying. Unlike direct confrontations that could be reported to teachers, these incidents often remained hidden from adults.

In more than one case, the students changed their profile picture or shared something on social media — a song, a photo — that was then mocked by their peers, leading to distress and isolation.

"I felt with a sense of urgency that today's teenagers are very different from our generation. These days, parents protect their children very carefully in life, but don't know how to monitor them online, often leaving them unsupervised," Chen says.

"As a result, children cannot



express themselves in the real world and turn to the internet. There, they encounter many problems they can't discuss with adults, because adults might dismiss these issues as insignificant."

Chen then shared her concerns about technology and social media with Chris Cooper, an expert in theater in education and a consultant for Drama Rainbow Education, and invited him to write the play.

"We urgently needed a play that responded to the situations these children are facing," she adds.

"Chris Cooper is a remarkable playwright and director with a strong understanding of China. I feel that having such a visionary extract the experiences of today's children and transform them into a play is incredibly important."

When Cooper began researching and working on the play, he was struck by the different perspectives of the older and younger generations. While the older generation tends to make a clear division between the digital world and reality, the young constantly move between the two realms.

"In fact, I'd go further to say that the synthesis between the virtual world and the real world is such now that for our children, it is the reality. It's a profound change in culture and in human consciousness," Cooper says.

Prior to the production, Chen asked Cooper to present a story framework, deliberately leaving space for development.

Through a collaborative creative process with the youngsters, who wrote poems and created drawings and installations, the final production has been enriched by what emerged.

In a creative session, Chen helped the students to each design a desk for their character. They began with sketches on paper, and then turned desks into art installations. Through symbolic elements and hidden objects, the owners' secrets and personal struggles are made apparent.

"When the protagonist pulls objects from the desks, she is able to hear the inner voices of those to whom they belong. These voices are the work of the children themselves.

The creative process is actually an exploration of the feelings experienced by primary and middle school students," Chen says.

"Through the voices, we are able to see that the characters have secrets, weaknesses, and sentiments they can't express to others. Theater helps us understand our children, feel what they feel and better support them."

The production also includes a personified AI character, who appears to talk with the protagonist whenever she encounters a struggle. According to Chen, this is a reflection of the fact that a lot of youngsters now resort to AI chatbots instead of their friends and family when they need to talk with someone.

"But in my conversations with the children, they also said the chatbots can't really solve any problem. They can never replace real human beings, but simply use big data analytics to generate a response. When they are picked on by others, chatbots often tell them to be understanding or reasonable, which they find unhelpful," she says.

Through the performance and creativity of young performers, the play asks the audience, teenagers and adults alike, "who am I" in this world of information overload and increasing dependence on digital tools.

"This play is about how relationships between children are mediated by the tools of social media, and also how the relationship between adults and children is mediated by a deeper crisis, which is an inability to recognize the needs of each other, and be able to speak to each other," Cooper says.

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

By YANG FEIYUE
yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Sports proving to be a tie that binds nations

China and Thailand will work on a series of sports and tourism events, as part of celebrations of the 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations. Cooperation agreements on key events were signed at the 2025 Running and Sports Tourism Exchange Signing Ceremony in Beijing on May 14.

They include the Chongli 168 Ultra-Trail in Hebei province and Chiang Mai by UTMB (a global trail running series and community), as well as the Chiang Mai 24: From Dusk Till Dawn run, and the Xiamen 6 Day Race in Fujian province.

The agreements cover in-depth cooperation in areas such as knowledge sharing, quota exchanges, resource sharing, internationalization efforts, rule refinement, and mutual visits.

"This is more than a provincial-level collaboration. It is a visionary effort to use sports and tourism as tools to strengthen people-to-people exchanges, which lie at the heart of international friendship. Such connections build the cultural and emotional bridges necessary for long-lasting cooperation between our two nations," said Omrisit Phrasundara Cullen, minister-counselor of Thailand to China, at the ceremony that was cohosted by the Chiang Mai Provincial Administrative Organization, the Sports Authority of Thailand, and the Beijing office of Tourism Authority of Thailand.

The event was a showcase of the



Left: Representatives from China and Thailand launch the 2025 Running and Sports Tourism Exchange Signing Ceremony in Beijing on May 14. **Right:** Thai food is a highlight during the ceremony. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

deep friendship and bilateral ties between China and Thailand, and was designed to enhance the race experience for Chinese runners and to help Chinese brands expand into Southeast Asian markets.

Cullen emphasizes that this cooperation marks a crucial step, demonstrating the power of sports and tourism as instruments for creating mutual benefits based on the strong and enduring relationship between the two countries.

It also aligns with the Thai government's goal of promoting sports tourism and elevating Thailand as a prominent sports and wellness tourism hub in Asia, by synergizing the potential of Chiang Mai in terms of its nature and culture with the world-class expertise of the Chinese

private sector in organizing sporting events, she says.

Nittaya Kerdjuntuk, director of the Office of the Professional Sports Committee, Sports Authority of Thailand, says that last year's Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc series event held in Chiang Mai welcomed over 7,000 participants from around the world.

"I was especially pleased to see that more than 2,600 of them came from China," she says.

"This shows the immense enthusiasm of Chinese athletes, and the strong connection between our two nations."

Kerdjuntuk says that Thailand is committed to a five-year development plan aimed at transforming Chiang Mai into a premier destination for both runners and tourists.

"We're working in collaboration

with the government and local businesses to make this vision a reality," she says.

Highlighting the strong friendship between Thailand and China, Kerdjuntuk says she's looking forward to more joint initiatives in the future.

"Our two countries have long enjoyed deep and friendly ties. In the years ahead, we plan to host joint expos and industry events to promote economic and cultural cooperation.

"We want Chiang Mai to become a vibrant hub for such exchanges, and I sincerely hope both countries will continue to achieve greater results through sports and cultural exchanges."

Pichai Lertpongadisorn, president of the Chiang Mai Provincial Administrative Organization, con-

veyed his aspirations of strengthening Sino-Thai friendship through sporting endeavors, while simultaneously fostering running culture and the growth of sports tourism.

Chinese sports experts highlighted the rapid growth of the country's events sector and its economic ripple effects at the ceremony, saying that marathons and trail races have emerged as flagship models of the country's "sports-plus" economy. They believe bilateral cooperation will unleash more market potential.

Yang Yucheng, vice-president of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics Alumni Association, and a seasoned ultramarathon runner, says the running economy is booming in both China and Thailand.

"When a city hosts a marathon or

cross-country race, it attracts large numbers of participants and spectators. This immediately drives demand for accommodation, food, transport and tourism. It creates a very visible economic ripple effect," Yang says.

He calls attention to the Wuxi Marathon in Jiangsu province in March, which reportedly generated nearly 500 million yuan (\$69.3 million) in local spending. In 2024, that figure was just over 300 million yuan.

"That's a huge jump, largely driven by the race's growing popularity and the influx of participants and their families, who also come to enjoy the cherry blossoms and local attractions," he explains.

While the pace of growth in running-related spending in China is impressive, he believes the sector still hasn't fully explored the potential of integrating tourism with sports events.

"There's a lot of room for improvement and innovation here," he says, adding that because of this potential, expectations from race organizers on both sides are high.

Cullen believes the signing of the bilateral cooperation agreement shows sports are more than competition, and serve as powerful tools for building relationships, creating social networks, and promoting sustainable economic, social, and cultural development within cities.

She expresses hope that the signing ceremony will mark not only the start of a fruitful collaboration, but also a new chapter in shared development and the exchange of knowledge between Asian cities.

Memory lane

Tianjin alley transports visitors back in time to another era
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Trump-Putin call reflects pullback on Ukraine issue
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Charging ahead

CATL debuts on Hong Kong exchange with mega IPO
BUSINESS, PAGE 9

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2025

Xi stresses resolve in high-quality growth

Henan province urged to further consolidate the foundation of its real economy

By MO JINGXI in Beijing and SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou

President Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of keeping businesses, employment, the market and expectations stable in the face of a complex international environment, saying that China will respond to various uncertainties with the certainty of its high-quality development.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks on Tuesday as he wrapped up a two-day fact-finding trip to Central China's Henan province.

Speaking to provincial Party and government officials at a work briefing on Tuesday in Zhengzhou, the provincial capital, Xi said that high-quality development is essential to Chinese modernization.

Faced with the complex external environment, it is necessary to firm up confidence, unwaveringly manage China's own affairs well, and steadfastly expand high-level opening-up, he said.

He also urged Henan, one of the country's economic powerhouses, to further consolidate the foundation of its real economy, and promote the development of new quality productive forces suited to local conditions and led by technological innovation, in order to enhance the capacity of its modern industrial system to support high-quality development.

When visiting Luoyang Bearing Group Co in the city of Luoyang on Monday, Xi said: "China has always adhered to the path of developing the real economy. From the past reliance on imported matches, soap and iron, to now becoming the world's largest manufacturing country with the most complete industrial categories, we have taken the right path."



President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, visits the Longmen Grottoes on Monday during his inspection of Luoyang, Henan province. During the visit, Xi learned about local efforts to enhance the protection and utilization of historical and cultural heritage, and promote the high-quality development of the cultural and tourism sector. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

As a traditional manufacturing enterprise specializing in bearings, Luoyang Bearing Group's products are widely used in fields such as aerospace, construction machinery, wind power generation, rail transit, port machinery and ships.

After learning about the company's efforts to accelerate the development of advanced manufacturing, Xi said that China must continue to strengthen the manufacturing sector, adhere to the principles of building self-reliance and strength, and master

core technologies in key fields. "The hope is placed on you," he told the on-site workers.

He also called for efforts to strengthen collaboration between industries, universities and research institutes, and cultivate a large number of high-quality talent.

Despite internal challenges and increasing external shocks, China's manufacturing industry has withstood pressure and maintained stable growth.

In April, the manufacturing sector saw its value-added output climb 6.6 percent year-on-year,

with that of equipment manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing up 9.8 percent and 10 percent, respectively, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday.

Advanced manufacturing is the high ground in global industrial competition and the main battlefield for technological innovation. Xi has repeatedly emphasized the need to upgrade the country's modernized industrial system, supported by advanced manufacturing.

In a resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th

CPC Central Committee in July last year, it was clearly stated that China will move faster to advance new industrialization, promote the growth and expansion of advanced manufacturing clusters, and make the manufacturing sector higher-end, smarter and more eco-friendly.

On Monday, Xi also visited the White Horse Temple, the first Buddhist temple in China, and the Longmen Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Contact the writers at mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

SCO forum endeavors to address global issue of poverty

By ZHAO JIA in Beijing and QIN FENG in Xi'an

President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter on Tuesday to the 2025 Shanghai Cooperation Organization Forum on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, pledging to enhance policy communication, share poverty reduction experience, deepen practical cooperation, and join hands to build a beautiful world free from poverty and with common prosperity.

The forum, which opened on Tuesday in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, was themed "Sustained Poverty Reduction and Cooperative Development: Advancing Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development among SCO Countries".

In his message, Xi noted that poverty eradication, which is a global issue, is a common goal of all countries in the world.

Through arduous efforts, China has successfully won the battle against poverty, achieved the poverty reduction target of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule, blazed a poverty reduction path with Chinese characteristics, and written a new chapter in the history of mankind's fight against poverty, he said.

According to official data, a total of 98.99 million residents in China's rural areas were lifted out of poverty, and 832 poverty-stricken counties and 128,000 impoverished villages were removed from the poverty list in 2021.

Emphasizing that the root cause of poverty is inadequate development, Xi said the SCO has actively carried out cooperation on poverty reduction and sustainable development in recent years, achieving remarkable results.

As the rotating chair of the SCO this year, China is ready to help more countries explore poverty reduction and sustainable development paths that suit their national conditions, he added.

See *Forum*, page 3

US threats to HK Judiciary are ideological showmanship

The recent introduction of the Hong Kong Judicial Sanctions Act by politicians in the United States, alongside a Senate resolution accusing Beijing of engaging in transnational repression, represents a flagrant abuse of legislative power cloaked in the rhetoric of human rights.

These actions, spearheaded by US lawmakers who seem more committed to ideological grandstanding than constitutional integrity, expose a deep-seated hostility toward the sovereign governance of China and the autonomous functioning of the legal institutions of the Hong Kong Special Administra-

tive Region. Rather than promoting justice, these measures distort it, weaponizing legal instruments for political aggression and international interference.

It is particularly egregious that these US legislators have chosen to target Hong Kong's judges, prosecutors and public officials — individuals whose careers have been marked by fidelity to the law, impartiality and commitment to public service. Judges such as Andrew Cheung Kui-nung, chief justice of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal, and Jeremy Poon Shiu-chor, chief judge of the Hong Kong High Court, are not political

operatives but jurists of the highest caliber. Their decisions are rooted firmly in the Basic Law of the HKSAR, common law principles and international legal standards, not in any political directive. To label their judgments as violations of human rights is not only defamatory but also a direct affront to the principle of judicial independence that the US claims to uphold.

One must also scrutinize the credibility of the senators behind this effort. US Senators Jeff Merkley, Dan Sullivan and John Curtis are neither international jurists nor experts in Hong Kong law. Their legislative mandate is to serve US voters, not

interfere in foreign jurisdictions' sovereign legal systems. It is difficult to believe that they have reviewed, let alone understood, the judicial decisions they so confidently condemn.

The foundation of the US argument — that Hong Kong's Judiciary has committed human rights abuses through lawful rulings — is intellectually hollow and legally incoherent. The cases that have attracted Western criticism typically involve serious offenses, including rioting, arson, unlawful assembly and attacks on law enforcement — acts that would be prosecuted in any jurisdiction. These are not examples of peaceful protest but threats to public

WORLD WATCH

By Virginia Lee

order and safety. No legitimate legal system would overlook such conduct. Yet, in a display of hypocrisy, the US senators seek to criminalize the enforcement of laws that mirror those within their criminal codes.

The hypocrisy deepens when one examines the US' human rights record. A country with over 2 million incarcerated individuals, a history of systemic racial injustice in its courts, and a documented legacy of extraterritorial renditions and indefinite detentions has no standing to lecture others on legal ethics.

See *Judiciary*, page 3

Framed by nature



Claire Myers-Lamprey, a British entrepreneur, wears a floral hat as she looks through a display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London, the United Kingdom, on Monday. The five-day show, which runs through Saturday, boasts cutting-edge garden designs and floral displays. KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH / AP

PRESIDENT'S LANDMARK LETTER INSPIRES ADOPTION OF WASTE SORTING

Shanghai pilot program develops into leading example of cleaner, greener living

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

After years of daily practice, Shanghai resident Hou Yifeng believes household waste sorting has become a "muscle memory" for him and his neighbors.

They routinely drain and bag food waste, putting the refuse into the correct bin and then disposing of the bag in a general waste bin. Delivery boxes are also folded and sorted for disposal.



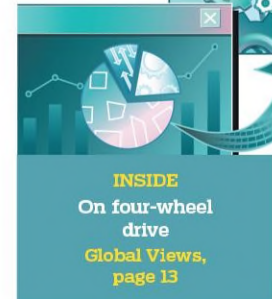
Even Hou's two children, aged 10 and 13, take the initiative to remind residents to separate hazardous waste.

Hou lives in one of the 84 residential compounds in Jiayang Road subdistrict in Hongkou district, where President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central

Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, first promoted the trend of trash sorting in November 2018.

Years later, in a letter of reply dated May 21, 2023, to volunteers engaged in trash sorting in the sub-district, Xi expressed his hope that they could continue to play a unique role in grassroots governance, and encouraged more residents to develop the habit of sorting trash.

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Waste sorting: Progressing to a greener future



A resident disposes of garbage at a smart waste collection station in a residential compound in Jiading Road subdistrict in Shanghai's Hongkou district on April 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From page 1

"The daily routine of waste sorting, although seen as a troublesome task by many in the first days, has evolved into a small thing to be so proud of over the years," Hou said.

Hou is a waste sorting volunteer, whose duty is to interact with residents and remind them of which bin to use to dispose of particular waste.

The enthusiasm for waste sorting in the municipality extends beyond residential compounds to restaurants, hotels, commercial areas, and office buildings.

Shanghai's residential compounds and other institutions achieved a sorting compliance rate of over 95 percent last year, Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau data showed.

The high compliance rate has been achieved for a number of consecutive years. Before waste sorting became compulsory in July 2019, the compliance rate was 15 percent.

"In our subdistrict, the amount of kitchen waste and recyclables has been increasing year by year, leading to a reduction in the daily volume of general waste being incinerated for energy generation," said Tian Hongyi, who is in charge of rubbish sorting at Jiading Road subdistrict.

"From a societal perspective, waste sorting is about easing the burden on the city's waste management system and safeguarding nature," she said.

Participation urged

In his letter of reply, Xi said he was glad to learn that after recent years of promoting trash sorting, the community had made more progress, while residents' civility had been enhanced, and the environment had become more beautiful.

Earlier, volunteer representatives from the subdistrict had written to Xi, reporting their achievements in trash sorting, and expressing their determination to make greater contributions to promoting waste sorting and disposal.

Noting that sorting and recycling trash is a systematic project that requires concerted, long-term efforts from all parties, Xi called for precise measures and active participation of the masses.

He also said that the volunteers could continue to contribute to promoting the construction of an ecological civilization and improving the level of civilization among the whole of society.

In July 2019, Shanghai became China's first city to make sorting household waste compulsory. Since then, waste sorting efforts in China have progressed, with roughly 300 cities implementing mandatory household and workplace waste sorting to date, achieving a coverage rate

of 82.5 percent in residential communities.

In Xiamen, Fujian province, the rate of recyclable waste recovery has increased from 25 percent in 2017 to 54 percent today, with the resource utilization rate of waste leaping from 44 percent to 90 percent.

In Ningbo, Zhejiang province, the separation rate of kitchen waste rose to 28 percent last year, with both the resource utilization rate of waste and safe treatment rate of waste reaching 100 percent.

The Jiading Road subdistrict volunteers said that the letter of reply from Xi was recognition of their work, and guided them to continue moving forward.

Innovative approach

Given the high mobility of residents, the large number of renters, and the diverse expat population at Hou's apartment complex — which is home to over 1,000 residents — the volunteers created a bilingual manual in Chinese and English for newcomers.

It includes tips on how waste sorting is conducted in Shanghai, and gives the waste collection locations in the residential compound.

The volunteers try to involve students as much as possible in the work. They explain information and key points about garbage sorting to the students who sometimes join the volunteers at the garbage collection stations for an hour to observe the process.

"With hands-on experience, the youngsters can experience the entire process of garbage sorting close-up, thereby promoting the formation of such habits in the entire family," said Hou, 42, who is chairman of a medical technology enterprise.

Cui He from the social work office in the subdistrict, said collaboration with some enterprises had allowed residents to witness the tangible benefits of their waste sorting efforts. These enterprises have transformed recycled milk cartons into tables and chairs, which Cui's team placed in public spaces to motivate residents to continue their efforts.

Also guided by Xi's letter of reply, renovation of a waste collection station was completed in December in Hou's complex.

Open waste bins were transformed into a smart waste collection station with a metallic appearance, unique curved design, and rain covers fitted with solar panels. The renovated station is a modern and aesthetically pleasing addition to the residential compound.

"This waste collection station is equipped with a range of high-tech features, including sensor-operated doors — which only open when someone approaches — to reduce odor emissions, waste amount identification and alerts, and detection and notification of misplaced waste items," said Tian, who is in charge of trash sorting.

In terms of functionality, the waste collection station further categorizes recyclable waste into five types — glass, metal, plastic, paper, and textiles — beyond the general four categories:



Visitors take a photo on Jan 10 at Shanghai Peace Park, now an environmental education base.



Waste sorting teaches us about a more refined attitude toward life. By treating each piece of waste seriously, we are essentially reevaluating our relationship with material goods."

Hou Yufeng, Shanghai resident

kitchen waste, recyclables, hazardous waste and general waste. Hazardous waste is divided into five types for separate disposal: light bulbs, batteries, medicines, mercury-containing waste, and organic solvent packaging.

The exterior of each bin is clearly labeled and has illustrations indicating the specific waste items to be deposited there. For instance, the bin for metal waste specifies items such as aluminum cans, milk powder tins, pots, metal cutlery, thermos bottles, faucets, computers, and small home appliances.

"Waste sorting teaches us about a more refined attitude toward life. By treating each piece of waste seriously, we are essentially reevaluating our relationship with material goods," said Hou.

In 2024, the city's daily recyclable waste recovery and hazardous waste separation reached nearly 8,000 metric tons and 2 tons, respectively, according to the Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau.

Daily kitchen waste separation reached more than 9,200 tons per day, processed mostly through anaerobic digestion for biogas production and heating, with aerobic composting making up a small proportion of the amount.

In response to some public concerns about the convenience of waste disposal and the cleanliness of the environment, Shanghai carried out widespread face-lifts and upgrades of waste collection stations in residential compounds last year, the bureau said. In 2023, a total of 347 high-quality waste sorting locations had been established as exemplary projects within the apartment complexes.

Low-carbon lifestyle

In Jiading Road subdistrict, where residents have largely adopted waste sorting habits, the role of volunteers has evolved to also include organizing a range of activities centered around low-carbon living.

Residents have been urged to jog regularly as a way to encourage "green travel", and to produce public works of art promoting a low-carbon lifestyle.

In January, the roof of a public service building in the subdistrict took on a new look. Supervised by an artist, 120 middle school students painted an image covering 200 square meters showing a woman riding a bicycle, and swallows carrying tree branches and flowers.

The volunteers have also organized flea markets for the exchange of old items to promote a low-carbon lifestyle.

Hou said both of his children have been to the flea markets, and exchanged unused small home appliances for potted plants, and clothing for handmade crafts. Such activities nurture environmental awareness in the community, he said.

"My children can not only sort waste accurately, but they also water plants with water from rice washing, and use old towels as cleaning rags. They understand the value of resources," said Hou.

He carries reusable bags when shopping, refuses disposable utensils when ordering food online, and buys his children toys made from recycled materials.

Tian said one of their aims this year is to award carbon credits to residents based on the volume of waste sorted, and provide discounts on electricity bills.

Another objective is to process kitchen waste within the residential compound, with the installation of a kitchen waste treatment facility that converts waste into organic fertilizer for plants in the apartment complex.

President Xi has paid much attention to green, circular and low-carbon development, and has made multiple instructions on the issue.

FIRST PERSON

Shanghai willing to nurture new ideas

Marie Harder, who comes from the United Kingdom, has been teaching at Fudan University since 2011. She is a professor at the department of environmental science and engineering.



I believe the results regarding waste sorting in Shanghai, a megacity with 25 million permanent residents, are incredible, representing a cutting-edge global achievement.

In terms of the amount of food waste collected every day in Shanghai, I don't know any city in the world that can do this. There is not even a small town in the rest of the world that can achieve this.

In addition to the quantity, the food waste collected is of exceptional cleanliness, which allows for biogas generation and compost production.

Also, most residents in Shanghai are very aware of the possibility that their city is providing a lot of opportunities for recycling.

I had conducted a decade-long study in Shanghai, visiting over 100 communities with my students to identify factors that enhance each individual's waste sorting practices.

For example, we even tried colors. If the waste sorting volunteer wears a bright yellow shirt, and the bin is bright yellow, it can have a small effect.

My team presented a report to the Shanghai municipal government on the main findings of our fieldwork in the city, highlighting three key factors: the optimization and easy access of facilities, residents' awareness of waste sorting roles, and a friendly, warmhearted volunteer near the bins to have positive social interactions with the residents, but never do the sorting job for them.

The research findings were incorporated into Shanghai's municipal regulation covering domestic waste management that took effect in July 2019, and I'm very excited that we made a contribution.

One thing quite special about the Shanghai regulation is that it is explicit about the role of each stakeholder. They include the truck drivers, the truck companies, the district government and the local government at community governance level. The importance of a volunteer to be nearby is clear, and the role and job of the resident is clear as well.

Throughout the process of doing research and working with governments of various levels, I felt that Shanghai is a truly ever-learning city. The city government is very alert and proactive to seed ideas and to learn from pilots. It is always checking, listening to feedback, and trying over many years, and then the pilots get bigger. And they are doing this kind of things in advance of upcoming needs. They try to anticipate the needs and start exploring solutions early.

Shanghai is a place where solutions are developed on the ground, and nurtured where they show promise.

I like China, for I find the general environment is very positive for someone who really wants to make a contribution to society. Everywhere in the country, everyone automatically knows they have to work for the betterment of life of all Chinese, above and beyond any personal targets they have.

Also, in China, and particularly in Shanghai, which I firmly believe will go from strength to strength, the government will notice something small but useful, and scale it up. That's an important reason why I really love to be in China and try to do good work in the country.

Marie Harder was talking with Zhou Wenting.



Left: Middle school students and teachers create a huge rooftop mural themed green and low-carbon at a public service building of Jiading Road subdistrict in January.



Right: Participants do warm-up exercises before the start of the "First Low-carbon Lesson" event on Jan 10 in Shanghai. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Children check a destroyed gas station on Tuesday after an Israeli strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza Strip. The latest round of strikes killed at least 44 people, according to Gaza's civil defence agency. EYAD BABA / AFP



US detachment seen after Putin, Trump dialogue

Statement shows Washington is retreating from taking lead in future peace talks, expert says

By YANG RAN in Beijing and ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington

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Despite attracting global attention, Monday's phone conversation between United States President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin yielded no major breakthroughs, underscoring the enduring challenges in resolving the Ukraine conflict, experts said.

Trump described his two-hour conversation with Putin as having gone "very well", saying in a social media post that Russia and Ukraine would "immediately start negotiations", with the conditions to be set by the two sides themselves. However, neither the time and location of the talks nor the participants were specified.

When questioned about why he had not followed through with threatened sanctions to pressure Russia into a peace deal, Trump told reporters: "Because I think there's a chance of getting something done, and if you do that, you can also make it much worse."

Zhang Hong, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, said Trump's call with Putin was partly a response to pressure from Europe. "After the Istanbul talks, Europe intensified its criticism of Moscow for escalating demands, which in turn pressured Washington to engage Putin directly," he said.

According to Zhang, the call served the dual purposes of pushing for a ceasefire and stabilizing US-Russia relations.

"Beyond Ukraine, the two nations still need cooperation on many security and regional matters, such as the Iran nuclear deal and Syria. A total rupture with Russia would hurt US interests. That's why Trump avoids harsh sanctions, as disagreements over Ukraine don't rule out collaboration elsewhere," he added.

Experts also said Trump's statement that Washington would let Moscow and Kyiv negotiate directly could signal a US retreat from taking the lead in future peace talks.

With the US having secured its economic interests through the signing of a mineral deal with Ukraine, its stance on the Russia-Ukraine negotiations is more detached, said Zhang. "Washington will no longer play the role of an active mediator but is a conditional participant, leaving Europe to handle the bulk of diplomatic efforts."

Sun Chenghao, head of the US-European Union program at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said Trump's call with European leaders after speaking with Putin could reflect an intention to push Europe to the forefront in mediating the conflict.

Forum: Country praised for SCO presidency

From page 1

Shen Yueyue, vice-chairwoman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and chairperson of the Good Neighborhood, Friendship and Cooperation Commission of the SCO, read out Xi's letter at the event.

The letter fully demonstrates President Xi's strong emphasis on eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, as well as his earnest expectations for deepening exchanges and mutual learning among SCO countries and building an SCO community with a shared future, Shen said.

Around 240 participants, including 120 foreign guests from countries such as Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Cambodia, attended the forum.

SCO Deputy Secretary-General Shri Janesh Kain said the group has made significant progress during China's presidency, particularly in enhancing cooperation among member nations in the area of sustainable development.

Last year, China proposed designating 2025 as the Year of SCO Sustainable Development, with a focus on fostering new drivers of development.

Kain said the forum is more relevant than ever, as over 700 million people still live in extreme poverty. The forum is an important step forward in formulating practical recommendations and launching new joint initiatives on poverty alleviation and sustainable development, he added.

In a video speech, Sardar Syed-aal Khan Nasar, deputy chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, described the SCO as a vital platform promoting connectivity and shared development, highlighting that China's notable achievements in poverty alleviation offer an inspiring example for developing countries, including Pakistan.

Pakistan and China have great potential for enhanced cooperation in agriculture through strengthened technological exchanges and knowledge sharing, he said.

Nasar added that Islamabad highly values and welcomes Beijing's commitment to training 1,000 Pakistani agricultural experts, with the first group of 300 already participating in such programs in China.

Math Mara, secretary of state of Cambodia's Ministry of Rural Development, said that China's approach to poverty reduction is often regarded as one of the most successful in history and that the forum "is a great opportunity to share experiences, challenges and explore the best way forward through partnership and collaboration".

Contact the writers at zhaofia@chinadaily.com.cn

China's ties with Europe gain impetus

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Senior diplomats of China and European countries have embarked on a series of engagements and communication this week in an effort to build on the most recent advancement of China-EU ties and shore up free trade and multilateralism.

As part of these engagements, Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate phone talks on Monday with his Polish and German counterparts. He also met with Denmark's foreign minister in Beijing on Monday.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Caspar Veldkamp will begin a two-day visit to China.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union. Earlier this month, leaders of the two sides exchanged congratulatory messages.

In his phone call with Johann Wadepuhl, Germany's new foreign minister, Wang expressed the hope that Germany will play a positive role as a major country and a core EU member.

He also said that Beijing expects Brussels to work together with China to properly resolve the EU's anti-subsidy case targeting China's battery electric vehicles.

Wadepuhl said that Germany is ready to commit itself to resolving differences through dialogue and consultation, and to support the EU-China negotiations to resolve issues such as China's EVs.

In his phone call with Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski,

Wang said that China expects Poland, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU, to "play a more constructive role" and "promote greater progress in China-EU relations".

Sikorski said that Poland will deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields and push forward Poland-China ties and EU-China relations.

Officials and scholars said that China and the EU share broad common interests and a mutual need for cooperation.

"As long as we uphold mutual respect and care for each other's core interests and major concerns, strengthen communication and coordination, and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation, we can effectively resolve differences and manage and control friction," Lu Shaye, special representative of the Chinese government on European affairs, told China Media Group in an interview this month.

Ding Chun, director of Shanghai-based Fudan University's Centre for European Studies, said that China and the EU have established over 20 high-level dialogue mechanisms. "China and the EU have developed a mature model of enabling the coexistence of competition and cooperation," he added.

During talks with Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen in Beijing, Wang defined China-EU relations as "having shown a stabilizing and improving momentum" since the start of this year, and said Beijing is willing to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with Brussels to jointly promote the healthy development of China-EU ties.

Judiciary: HKSAR will not be intimidated

From page 1

The continued use of the death penalty, the erosion of voting rights and the overt politicization of judicial appointments further underscore the internal crisis facing the US judiciary. If these senators were sincerely concerned with justice, they would begin by confronting glaring inequities within their political and legal systems.

Equally absurd is the US Senate resolution's accusation of "transnational repression". China must protect its national security and uphold public order like any sovereign state. The international pursuit of suspects through lawful channels such as Interpol is a standard practice employed by the US and its allies. Yet when China does so — within the bounds of international law — it is sensationalized as repression. Meanwhile, the US openly engages in surveillance, extraterritorial arrests and even targeted killings, all justified as national defense. The double standard is not only staggering, but also indefensible.

These legislative actions do not stem from a genuine concern for judicial fairness or civil liberties; they are part of a broader strategy to contain China's rise and undermine its governance through legislative interference. As the US' influence in Asia wanes, its political apparatus resorts to coercive measures masked in moralistic language.

Targeting Hong Kong's Judiciary is not an act of human rights advocacy — it is a calculated attempt to discredit one of Asia's most respected legal systems. The HKSAR's courts are renowned for their transparency, bilingual jurisprudence and international legal engagement. That credibility is precisely what Washington hopes to tarnish.

Including multiple Hong Kong legal professionals in this sanctions effort is not only excessive; it is a deliberate act of intimidation. Figures such as Maggie Yang Mei-kei, director of public prosecutions, and Anthony Chau Tin-hang, deputy director of public prosecutions, who have carried out their prosecutorial duties with utmost professionalism, are now being unfairly stigmatized for fulfilling roles essential in any lawful society. The message is clear: Any legal actor who does not conform to US ideological expectations will be persecuted through legislative fiat. This is not justice — it is coercion, plain and simple.

The HKSAR's residents will see through this charade. They understand that these actions have nothing to do with protecting freedoms and respect; they do with preserving Western hegemony. In sharp contrast to its portrayal by ideologues in Washington, China operates within a legal and constitutional framework that reflects its national conditions and priorities. Attempts to subvert that sys-

tem through foreign sanctions are not only futile — they are insulting. They reveal a colonial mindset that refuses to accept that other nations may govern themselves differently, often more competently.

What is at stake here is more than the reputations of individual judges or prosecutors. It is the integrity of a legal system, national sovereignty and people's dignity. China will not be lectured, nor will the HKSAR be intimidated. US lawmakers may pass resolutions and draft bills, but they cannot rewrite legal facts or dismantle a Judiciary that continues to serve its community with fairness, clarity and strength.

If the US Senate wishes to restore any semblance of legal integrity, it must first abandon the delusion that its domestic laws hold universal jurisdiction. It must cease its reckless interference in the internal affairs of other jurisdictions and respect the principle of sovereign equality. Until that day arrives, these legislative gestures will remain what they are: hollow proclamations of a declining power, desperate to retain influence it no longer commands, through methods it understands.

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Rasmussen said that Denmark supports free trade, opposes "decoupling", and believes that trade wars do not serve the interests of any party.

Denmark, which will assume the EU presidency in the second half of this year, looks to strengthen communication and coordination with China on multilateral affairs, jointly safeguarding the multilateral system and international order, and maintain the momentum of globalization, he added.

During the talks on Monday, the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and Denmark all reaffirmed their countries' support for the one-China policy.

In addition, the talks touched on the Ukraine crisis. Wang noted that Russia and Ukraine have recently restarted direct talks, and he said that China expects various parties involved to further show their willingness to politically resolve the crisis.

Long Jing, deputy director of the Center for European Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, said the changes in global governance prompted by the US administration will provide a chance for China and the EU to "join hands in advancing international multilateral cooperation".

"The resurgence of the US' narrow nationalism and unilateralist strategies may prompt Europe to recalibrate its stance toward China, adopting a more conciliatory and cooperative approach," she wrote in a recent article.

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CHINA

Dongji Memorial Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/03/2025

Denise Elizabeth Wynne (left), whose father, Dennis Morley, was a *Lisbon Maru* survivor, and several guests participate in the unveiling ceremony for the Memorial for Dongji Fishermen's Rescue of British Prisoners of War on an island in Dongji township, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. In October 1942, the *Lisbon Maru*, a cargo vessel owned by the Japanese army used to transport more than 1,800 British POWs from Hong Kong to Japan, was struck by United States forces off the Zhoushan Islands. As the ship sank, local fishermen risked their lives to rescue over 300 people.

YAO YINGKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Lai's confrontational approach making dialogue impossible

Taiwan leader accused of 'two-faced' acts as protests mark one year at helm

By ZHANG YI zhangyi1@chinadaily.com.cn

A Chinese mainland spokesman on Tuesday criticized Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te's recent comments on cross-strait relations, accusing him of using "two-faced tactics" and saying his separatist stance is incompatible with peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said in Beijing that Lai's confrontational approach leaves no room for dialogue. His remarks came in response to Lai's address marking his first year in office and recent interviews in which Lai discussed relations with the mainland.

Chen said Lai's rhetoric reflects a strategy of seeking foreign backing and military support to advance separatist goals, while portraying the mainland as a "threat" by framing cross-strait tensions as a clash

between "democracy and authoritarianism". Such narratives, he said, further escalate tensions.

Lai has also promoted economic decoupling from the mainland and placed restrictions on cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, Chen said.

He condemned what he called the hypocrisy of Lai's stated willingness to engage with the mainland on the basis of "mutual respect", while pushing to revive negotiations under what Chen called a "two-state" framework.

"His two-faced tactics are doomed to fail," Chen said, adding that regardless of the rhetoric, Taiwan's status of being part of China and the trend toward reunification remain unchanged.

The mainland remains ready to hold talks with political parties, groups and individuals in Taiwan to promote reunification and

expand cooperation, Chen said, reiterating the one-China principle as the basis for such dialogue.

In recent days, large-scale protests have taken place in Taipei, Taichung and other cities, where demonstrators voiced anger over what they view as poor governance and ineffective policymaking by Taiwan authorities.

On Monday, Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang, held a rally in which participants honked car horns twice to express dissatisfaction and call for Lai's resignation.

Recent polls show growing public discontent. A TVBS survey found Lai's dissatisfaction rating has risen to 55 percent — the highest since he took office.

A separate poll by the United Daily News found 53 percent of respondents dissatisfied with his governance, compared with 37 percent who expressed satisfaction. It marked the highest dissatisfaction level for an island leader nearing their first anniversary in recent years.

Criticism of the ruling Democrat-

ic Progressive Party centers on its handling of cross-strait ties and issues on the island. On Tuesday, the Kuomintang released a list of 10 broken promises and policy failures by Lai's administration, including setbacks in tariff negotiations with the United States and shortcomings in energy policy.

The island's pro-reunification Labor Party said the economy, industrial development, labor conditions and cross-strait relations have all suffered, urging Lai to respond to public concerns and change policies that have increased tensions with the mainland.

Wang Dan-ping, a professor at Taiwan's Fu Jen Catholic University, said cross-strait relations have become increasingly tense under the DPP, which relies on the US for support and has labeled the mainland an "external hostile force".

Wang said Taiwan should see the mainland as family rather than an adversary, adding that only by doing so can peace be achieved between the two sides.

Cyberattack on tech firm being investigated

By CAO YIN caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese police said on Tuesday they have launched an investigation into a cyberattack on a technology company in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, calling it a large-scale, organized assault by an overseas hacker group.

The public security bureau in Tianhe district said the attack bore clear characteristics of cyberwarfare and was far beyond the capabilities of ordinary hackers.

A preliminary investigation showed the attackers bypassed the company's network defenses, infiltrated the back-end systems of its self-service devices and uploaded malicious software to take control of multiple network devices.

The incident caused hours-long service disruptions to the company's website and some of its business systems, resulting in significant losses and raising concerns over possible user data breaches, police said.

Authorities said the hacker group had long used open-source tools to scan, probe and exploit vulnerabilities in the networks of key Chinese departments, sensitive industries and tech enterprises, aiming to steal data and disrupt operations.

Police said the latest attack not only harmed the legitimate rights of the Guangzhou company, but also posed a serious threat to China's cyberspace order and the public interest. Authorities pledged to crack down on such activity in accordance with the law.



New beginning

A helicopter takes off from a helipad on the 6th floor of Global Harbor shopping mall in Shanghai on Monday. The flight marked the official launch of Shanghai's first customized low-altitude sightseeing route in the city's central area.

ZHANG LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chinese treatment cures Pakistani girl

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

A 4-year-old Pakistani girl with severe thalassemia has been successfully treated with a Chinese-developed gene-editing drug, marking the first time the technology has been used on a foreign minor, according to the Children's Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai.

The hospital held a small ceremony on Tuesday to celebrate the recovery of the girl, nicknamed Aiza, who had relied on regular blood transfusions to survive before receiving treatment earlier this year. After undergoing gene-editing therapy, her dependency on blood transfusions ended and she has returned to living a normal life, doctors said.

Aiza was brought to Shanghai by her parents in January. The treatment used a base-editing drug called CS-101, designed to target severe beta-thalassemia. The clinical research project was launched in 2023 by a team led by Professor Zhai Xiaowen in collaboration with CorrectSequence Therapeutics, a

Shanghai-based biotech company.

So far, four patients, including Aiza, have received the therapy, with promising safety and efficacy results, the hospital said.

"With the meticulous care of the hospital's multi-disciplinary team, the child's total hemoglobin concentration has exceeded 100 grams per liter, allowing her to successfully get rid of blood transfusions," said doctor Qian Xiaowen, who supervised Aiza's treatment. "The entire treatment process progressed smoothly."

Patients with severe thalassemia typically require monthly transfusions for life and may die from complications without them, doctors said.

Aiza's father, Muhammad Adeel, a 40-year-old physicist who previously worked as a student in a factory in Hong Kong, expressed his gratitude by presenting flowers and a thank-you card to the medical team.

"Our family felt not only the physical care for the child but also emotional support from the healthcare workers," Adeel said. "The girl experienced ups and downs in her emo-

tions during the past months, and the healthcare workers supported us throughout all those moments."

Aiza is the second among Adeel's three children; the other two are healthy.

He began searching for a cure while working in Hong Kong. In April last year, he learned online that the treatment had been successfully used in other underage patients and contacted the company.

At Tuesday's ceremony, the hospital gave gifts to Aiza and expressed wishes for her continued health and happiness. CorrectSequence Therapeutics also offered a card that read, "Wish your life be filled with prosperities and happiness. Your smile and love shall enlighten more lives in the world."

Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder. It has a high prevalence in the Mediterranean Basin, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia, and is more common in southern China.

As part of the treatment, doctors collected Aiza's autologous hematopoietic stem cells and used CS-101 to precisely edit targeted areas of her

HK identifies key spots to further boost tourism

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong amberwu@chinadailyhk.com

The Hong Kong government on Tuesday unveiled nine new "tourist-hotspot" projects, including Central's old town, Kowloon Walled City, and scenic mountain and coastal areas, as part of its efforts to attract tourists seeking in-depth exploration.

The launch aligns with a robust recovery in the city's tourism sector, which recorded more than 16 million tourist trips between January and April — a 10 percent increase from the same period last year.

The nine projects span Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories and the city's outlying islands. They feature locations tied to well-known local brands such as sauce manufacturer Lee Kum Kee, along with popular bazaars in Victoria Park, a pink trumpet garden in Tamar Park, historical buildings in Central and various attractions in the Kowloon City district, as well as a virtual reality exhibition highlighting the now-demolished Kowloon Walled City.

Other highlights include the Old Yau Ma Tei Police Station, events hosted by the city's disciplined forces, which consist of police, firefighters, customs officials and others, and outdoor landmarks such as Victoria Peak, Sai Kung's coastal scenery and the former Hung Hom railway freight terminal.

Unveiled at a Tuesday afternoon news conference, the projects were introduced by the government's Working Group on Developing Tourist Hotspots. The initiatives will be rolled out soon, with full implementation expected by the fourth quarter of 2026.

The projects will feature attraction visits, thematic travel routes for individuals and groups, augmented-

reality exhibitions and upgraded tourism facilities.

Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration Cheuk Wing-hing, who chairs the working group, told reporters that Hong Kong's tourism sector must continue to innovate to meet evolving travel patterns.

Cheuk said the sites were selected based on factors including visitor preferences, time-efficiency and cost. He added that the government will monitor progress, gather feedback and explore the development of new projects.

Tourism industry representatives welcomed the initiative and pledged to design attractive tourism products around the selected sites.

Yiu Pak-leung, a lawmaker representing the tourism sector, cited the Old Yau Ma Tei Police Station as a particularly compelling site, given its ties to Hong Kong's film history and police culture. He said the nine projects cater to diverse tourist interests and offer opportunities for the industry to develop unique offerings.

Speaking at a regular news conference on Tuesday morning, Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu attributed the recent tourism surge — including an 8 percent year-on-year increase in the number of tourist trips from the Chinese mainland and a 17 percent surge in non-mainland tourist trips — to joint efforts by the government and various sectors.

Lee said mega events and the recovery of the city's aviation capacity have further boosted its global appeal. He pledged enhanced inter-departmental coordination to implement the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0, adding that the government would continue to adapt to emerging trends and enrich offerings under the vision that "tourism is everywhere" in Hong Kong.

Relay satellite ready to assist intl lunar missions

HEFEI — Queqiao 2, China's relay satellite for its lunar landing missions, is set to support future moon exploration endeavors by other countries, according to the country's Deep Space Exploration Lab.

The satellite, which supported Earth-moon communications for China's Chang'e 6 mission that has retrieved samples from the moon's far side, will provide relay services for lunar missions from China and other countries, the lab said on Monday.

Launched in March last year, Queqiao 2, also known as Magpie Bridge 2, is equipped with three scientific payloads — an extreme ultraviolet camera, a two-dimensional-coded energetic neutral atom imager and an Earth-moon very long baseline interferometry experiment system.

The satellite has been stably operating in orbit for 14 months, performing scientific tasks such as capturing large-scale images of Earth's plasma and magnetosphere layers, and conducting VLBI exper-

iments in the Earth-moon system, according to the lab.

The satellite's extreme ultraviolet camera captured the first global 83.4-nanometer ionosphere image, providing crucial data for studying the impact of solar activity on the plasmasphere.

The satellite's VLBI experiment system, in coordination with the Shanghai 65m radio telescope, extended the observation baseline to 380,000 kilometers and successfully observed deep-space targets, including radio source A00235 and the Chang'e 6 orbiter.

Queqiao 2 is poised to play a crucial part in the country's future Chang'e 7 and Chang'e 8 missions.

China plans to launch the Chang'e 7 mission around 2026 to explore the environment and resources of the moon's south pole. The Chang'e 8 mission, set for around 2028, will conduct experiments for the in-situ utilization of lunar resources.

XINHUA



A small ceremony is held at the Children's Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai to celebrate the recovery of Aiza on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

genetic material. This reactivated specific protein expression and restored the oxygen-carrying function of hemoglobin. The edited stem cells were then transfused back into her body.

As a result, her hemoglobin concentration reached the level of a healthy person, eliminating her need for blood transfusions.

"This success will help accelerate the clinical translation of China's original gene-editing technology," said Zhai, who is also vice-president of the hospital. "It offers hope of a one-time cure for patients worldwide suffering from the disease."

Zhai added that the hospital and the company are exploring further applications of the technology in children with other genetic metabolic disorders.

CHINA



Students admire exhibits on display at the Ancient Architecture Campus Museum in Shanxi Experimental Secondary School, Shanxi province, on April 10. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Ancient architecture museum opens in Shanxi high school

Endeavor hoped to get more young people involved in cultural heritage

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

Shanxi's first museum based on a school campus opened on April 10, showcasing the province's wealth of historical heritage and ancient architecture, and immersing the students in the culture of museums and cherishing the past.

The Ancient Architecture Campus Museum, located in Shanxi Experimental Secondary School in the provincial capital Taiyuan, aims to integrate cultural heritage protection into the educational environment of the campus.

As part of the museum's inauguration, a prelude exhibition titled Ancient Architecture Technology Enters Campus was also launched.

"Through my role as a guide, I deeply appreciated the spirit of the nation's master craftsmen," said Ren Hongye, a student at the school. She found herself transforming classroom knowledge into dynamic cul-

tural dissemination, realizing that "preserving traditional culture is everyone's responsibility".

Using ancient building models, digital interactions and informative panels, the exhibition showcases the heritage and current technological preservation efforts for Shanxi's ancient buildings. This allows students and teachers to engage closely with history.

Highlights of the exhibition included a model of the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, the world's tallest wooden pagoda; a 3D-printed sculpture model of Foguang Temple in Wutai county, Xinzhou city; and an interactive installation of "the 28 constellations" — colored statues depicting celestial phenomena — from the Yuhuang Temple in Jincheng city.

These exhibits utilized digital technology to make abstract historical knowledge visible, tangible and interactive. They merged history, art and technology, providing an immersive experience that highlighted the charm of the collision between traditional craftsmanship and modern technology.

"This combination of tradition and technology, allowing us to explore ancient buildings on computers, helps us understand Shanxi's architectural heritage," said Song Jiaqi,

another student. "It makes us more confident in promoting Shanxi's culture and proud of our country's technological advancements."

At the unveiling ceremony of the museum, Wu Zhijun, the school's principal, said, "I hope this opportunity will build a cultural bridge, allowing students to engage closely with ancient architectural relics, appreciate the charm of Shanxi's culture, and foster pride in our local heritage and confidence in our national identity."

Shanxi is known for having the largest and most well-preserved collection of ancient buildings in China, with nearly 28,000 structures, including temples, opera stages and pavilions. About 80 percent of China's surviving wooden structures from before the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) are in Shanxi, including the only three remaining Tang Dynasty (618-907) wooden buildings. This wealth of ancient architecture provides unparalleled opportunities for cultural heritage education.

"Integrating cultural heritage into campuses is not just about spreading knowledge, it's about nurturing cultural confidence and a sense of protection in the younger generation," said Lu Yi, director of the Shanxi Academy of Ancient Building, Paint-

ed Sculpture and Fresco Preservation, a research institution of the Shanxi Culture Relics Bureau. As one of the leading institutions for science popularization in the province, it has been striving to bring the research results of Shanxi's cultural heritage to a wider audience.

Lu said that the campus museum is improving its exhibition content and presentation, promising an even more comprehensive display in the future.

The unveiling ceremony was part of the school's 2025 science and technology festival.

At the event, the institute dispatched a team of young volunteers. They conducted professional explanations and technical demonstrations on-site, helping students operate 3D scanning equipment and making abstract professional knowledge tangible and accessible.

Lu hoped that the museum, as the first of its kind in Shanxi, would serve as a model and lead the way for similar initiatives. He added that in the future, this model could be expanded to more schools, allowing the benefits of cultural heritage protection to reach more young people.

Contact the writers at zhuxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn



From left: Visitors enjoy a performance on Tianjin Ancient Cultural Street in Nankai district on May 1. Performers stage a street show at the newly renovated and opened Luhe Duyun Alley in Tianjin on May 1. PHOTOS BY WEI JIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tianjin revives ambience of old town

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin yangcheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Passing under a vibrant vermilion archway in the morning, the lively calls of street vendors fill the air, instantly transporting visitors back to the bustling old-town ambience of Tianjin, a thriving coastal city with a rich history.

As evening falls, amid red walls and black tiles adorned with shimmering lights, visitors are captivated by popular intangible cultural heritage items and local delicacies. These picturesque scenes unfold in the recently renovated Luhe Duyun Alley, nestled within the Tianjin Ancient Cultural Street in Nankai district.

The 200-meter alley mirrors the scenes depicted in the historical *Luhe Duyun Painting*, showcasing the vibrant commercial and cultural activities along a grand canal built during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) under Emperor Qianlong's rule

(1736-96). "The newly renovated and opened alley is part of Nankai district's endeavor to establish itself as a premier tourism hub in the city. Plans are underway to introduce additional tourist attractions throughout the district," said Nie Weixun, head of Nankai district.

The district saw 1.61 million tourist visits during the May Day holiday from May 1 to 5, creating a combined value of 523 million yuan (\$72.4 million), up 14 percent year-on-year, according to official statistics. "The renovation efforts and the introduction of unique cultural and tourism initiatives are poised to infuse fresh energy into the street, attracting a larger audience keen to explore and experience the area," Nie said.

Efforts to upgrade the alley's buildings have produced positive outcomes. For example, Jade Emperor Pavilion, a Taoist temple dating back to 1427, and the Tianhou Temple, dedicated to the worship of the Mazu

goddess and constructed in 1326, have both attracted more visitors with their new looks and services.

Tianhou Palace has begun promoting official cultural and creative products, such as figurines, specialty cups and sachets, since this May.

During the five-day holiday, it launched an immersive night tour, unveiling a treasure hunt map connected with local folk museums to introduce traditional competitions, enriching the visitors' experience.

Renowned cultural and historical scholar Luo Shuwei, 87, who recently published a book on the street, emphasized that this 1-kilometer street serves as a bridge between Tianjin's past and future, as well as China's heritage. For example, it has seen a revival of both heritage landmarks and long-standing local enterprises, showcasing the street's role in keeping tradition and contemporary vitality alive.

The street is home to renowned

brands like Yumeijing, a household name known for its children's skin cream. Since the production of the first 25-gram sachet in 1979, it has sold 4.6 billion to date, said Jiang Wei, president of Tianjin Yumeijing Group. In addition, the group delves into the core values of Chinese culture, emphasizing "integrity," "benevolence" and "diligence," she said.

"Yumeijing will actively explore the cultural essence of time-honored brands, integrating our corporate culture to showcase the vitality of Chinese traditional culture," she said.

Such efforts to embed cultural heritage into modern life mirror the broader revitalization taking place along the street. In this context, the street's administrative committee has set forth plans to strengthen links between the historic Dujin Tower, built in 1493, and neighboring areas, and plans to develop them into a prominent tourist destination.

There will also be efforts to revitalize some nearby buildings, introducing a variety of cultural and tourism activities to deepen visitors' understanding on local customs in Tianjin.

Children in Xizang receive free operations for limb deformities

By PALDEN NYIMA in Lhasa palden_nyima@chinadaily.com.cn

During the May 1 holiday this year, 28 children from Chamdo city in the Xizang autonomous region received free corrective surgeries for limb deformities at the city's Kharub District People's Hospital.

A team of surgeons from Beijing performed the operations as part of a project supported by Beijing Jishuitan Hospital, the public welfare medical team at Beijing Peking University People's Hospital and the Beijing Joint Care Foundation.

This initiative, now in its eighth year, has provided life-changing operations for nearly 300 young patients in the city, allowing them to be more confident and independent.

According to the foundation, they have been arranging for orthopedic experts to voluntarily carry out public welfare assistance activities for children with congenital hand and foot deformities in Chamdo since 2017.

"The causes of the defects are related to the local dietary habits. Xizang is a geologically active area, and local disease is also related to the natural environment," said Lin Jianhao, director of the bone and joint department at Peking University People's Hospital and chairman of the foundation.

Lin said that more than 95 percent of the patients are children with an average age of 6 to 7 years old, and the foundation has spent more than 2 million yuan (\$278,000) on treatment for these patients.

Lin also said that the children feel different from others because of these defects, and this can have psychological and physiological

I am very thankful to the experts from Beijing, as well as the meticulous care provided by the medical staff."

Lodre Tenba, grandpa of 10-year-old Tibetan patient Wangmo

effects on their growth, and they may exhibit behaviors such as avoiding social interactions and experience emotional distress.

"It is important to address this issue before the child matures mentally," Lin added.

In addition, this project has been training more local medical professionals to deal with these defects.

Ten-year-old Tibetan girl Wangmo was born with congenital abnormalities in her hands — each hand had six fingers but lacked thumbs and proper grips, making even basic tasks such as holding a pen or tying shoelaces difficult.

Thanks to the surgery, her hands now look and function almost like those of a normal child.

"I am very thankful to the experts from Beijing, as well as the meticulous care provided by the medical staff," Lodre Tenba, Wangmo's grandpa, was quoted as saying by People's Daily.

"Not only have they waived all treatment costs for us, but they have also ensured that we do not have to bear any transportation or accommodation expenses incurred during the treatment."

China's highest city no longer a treeless outlier

LHASA — Nagchu, China's highest city at an average elevation of over 4,500 meters, has achieved the seemingly unachievable: it is no longer "the city without trees".

Once a barren landscape where even survival was a challenge, the northern city in the Xizang autonomous region has rewritten its ecological destiny through decades of perseverance, marking a historic breakthrough in high-altitude afforestation.

Perched on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Nagchu was officially reclassified as a city in May 2018. Its relentless winds and thin air, with oxygen levels just half those at sea level, have made it a place where boiling water barely reaches 85 C and packaged goods swell as if ready to burst.

For many years, the absence of trees was a defining feature, so much so that award-winning author Ma Lihua once wrote in her travel notes that "Nagchu Town has everything, except a tree".

Now, parks and sidewalks across Nagchu are dotted with alpine willow, spruce and sea buckthorn — a testament to a quiet revolution. On the city streets, billboards reading "promote high-altitude greening, erase Nagchu's treeless legacy" proclaim this transformation.

"Nagchu has achieved China's

We've successfully tested tree planting in urban areas, with a survival rate of over 80 percent."

Dainzin Puncog, a resident of Nagchu, the Xizang autonomous region, who works with the city's forestry and grassland bureau

highest-altitude success in tree planting," said Cewang Rigzin, director of the city's forestry and grassland bureau. Since 2021, the city has invested heavily in afforestation, forest management and experimental planting in high-elevation urban areas.

"When I was a child, I could only see green trees on TV or in photos. Now, we've successfully tested tree planting in urban areas, with a survival rate of over 80 percent," said Dainzin Puncog, a native of Nagchu with the bureau.

Trial planting of trees in Nagchu began in the 1990s. Generations of local families and officials have poured efforts into this achievement, turning what once seemed a fanciful idea into reality.

XINHUA



Residents of Nagchu city, Xizang autonomous region, plant saplings during an event on May 8. JIGME DORJE / XINHUA

WORLD

South Asia facing extreme, frequent heat waves

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
vivienxu@chinadailyapac.com

The mercury rose above 48 C in some parts of Pakistan as locals fell in the grip of the latest heat wave. Experts say that a pattern of extreme and frequent heat waves, which can lead to a public emergency, is emerging in South Asia, linked to climate change.

According to a warning from the Pakistan Meteorological Department, most of the plains across the nation will remain under the influence of a scorching heat wave until Saturday.

The daytime temperatures in central and upper Punjab are expected to be 5 C to 7 C higher than seasonal averages; the southern parts, including Sindh, southern Punjab and Balochistan, will continue to experience 4 C to 6 C above normal temperatures. The cities of Dadu and Jacobabad recorded the highest temperature of 48 C on Monday.

Media outlet Pakistan Today reported on Monday that as temperatures kept rising, hundreds of patients suffering from heat stroke have been reported across Punjab. This has strained hospital resources in major cities and areas of South Punjab to their limits, with a high influx in emergency departments.

Health authorities in Pakistan have advised residents to stay indoors during peak hours, increase the intake of water and minerals, with the elderly, children, those with preexisting health issues, and outdoor workers and commuters being most vulnerable to heat strokes.

"Avoid exposure to direct sunlight during the daytime and remain hydrated," the new advisory issued by the meteorological department said.

A spokesperson from Pakistan's Provincial Disaster Management Authority said heat stroke centers



People cool off at a water park on a hot summer day in Lahore, Punjab Province, Pakistan, on Sunday. ARIF ALI / AFP

have been advised to stay fully operational, while hospitals and rescue groups are on alert, reported Aaj News, a local media outlet.

The mercury also soared in parts of India with the meteorological department forecasting that states in northern and central India need to prepare for a prolonged heat wave. According to its statement on Monday, maximum temperatures in the range of 40 C to 46 C were recorded in most parts of Rajasthan and Punjab.

Emergency advisory

Bangladesh has also recently grappled with one of the most severe heat waves in recent years. Last week, the country issued an emergency advisory urging people to remain cautious and take protective measures.

Christine Loh, chief development strategist at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's Institute for the Environment, said in parts of Pakistan temperatures are 4 C to 6 C higher than seasonal averages, with some places reaching above 50 C; the temperatures are high even at night.

Thus a pattern of severe heat waves in South Asia is "clear and accelerating," she said. "What once might have been a one-in-a-hundred-year event, is recurring frequently."

She cautioned that this phenomenon leads to heat stress or dehydration, which is a public health emergency. It is important for local agencies to take preventive measures to combat the impact of the heat on humans and save lives. "Extreme heat kills. Early warning is

vital. Tell people what to expect before the heat arrives, so they know what to do and what not to do."

Apart from that, extreme heat usually worsens water stress, which can also affect crops and food. It may even cause power shortages, Loh added.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former prime minister of Pakistan, said that freak weather, including both extreme heat and cold, is increasingly taking place in South Asia, evidently caused by climate change.

He said that while measures such as having protective eyewear and clothing and improving workplace conditions are helpful, it is important to address the root cause of heat waves — which is energy consumption and greenhouse gases associated with global warming effects.

China reaffirms commitment to health advances

Beijing will continue to support WHO in building a global community: Minister

By ZHENG WANYIN in Geneva
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

China will continue to firmly support the World Health Organization and multilateralism, and stands ready to jointly build a global community of health for all with all WHO member states, said Lei Haichao, minister of China's National Health Commission, at the 78th World Health Assembly in Geneva on Monday.

The assembly is the WHO's highest decision-making body, and usually takes place in the Swiss city in May each year.

Lei, who is also head of the Chinese delegation to the 78th assembly, said China consistently and firmly supports the WHO in playing its leading role in coordinating global public health affairs, while actively engaging in global health cooperation.

"Over the past six decades, China has dispatched more than 30,000 medical personnel to 77 countries and regions, providing treatment to over 300 million patients," he said. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, China supplied 500 billion personal protective items and 2.3 billion doses of vaccines globally."

Lei also highlighted the progress China has made in promoting the health and well-being of its people, particularly improvements in key health indicators of residents and equitable accessibility of health services.

"In 2024, China's average life expectancy reached 79 years, placing it at the forefront of upper-middle-income countries," he said. "Primary healthcare institutions have been established in both rural areas and urban communities, with 90.8 per-

cent of families able to reach the nearest medical facility within 15 minutes."

The 78th World Health Assembly, which runs until May 27, is themed "One World for Health". Attended by delegations from all WHO member states, it brings together high-level country representatives and other stakeholders to address the pressing global health challenges.

This year, attention is focused on the adoption of an agreement on how to better tackle future pandemics in a more coordinated and equitable manner, as well as on the WHO's budgeting and financing.

Addressing the opening ceremony, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said this year's meeting is especially significant, as member states gather to consider the adoption of the treaty, the final draft of which was released last month.

However, he pointed out that the WHO is being "weakened" precisely at a time when a strong organization is most needed, citing funding cuts and a slashed budget that continue to strain the organization, and have led to workforce reductions.

The WHO has revised its budget downward to \$4.2 billion for the next two years, or \$2.1 billion per year — an "extremely modest" figure for a global health agency, he said.

"\$2.1 billion is the equivalent of global military expenditure every eight hours. \$2.1 billion is the price of one stealth bomber; \$2.1 billion is one-quarter of what the tobacco industry spends on advertising and promotion every single year. It seems somebody switched the price tags on what is truly valuable in our world," he said.

ASEAN eyes clean energy shift to meet Paris goals

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong
prime@chinadailyapac.com

China is the biggest source of foreign investments in Southeast Asia's clean energy sector, helping the region to reach its decarbonization goals, a regional webinar heard on Tuesday.

Analysts also noted that China can serve as a role model for members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations which are also pursuing their respective green transition goals in line with their commitments to the Paris climate pact.

Sharon Seah Li-Lian, a senior fellow of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore and coordinator of the ASEAN Studies Centre and Climate Change in Southeast Asia Program, noted that with the US retreating from the Paris climate treaty, China is "providing greater leadership" in global climate issues.

Seah said China has "benefited economically and strategically" from its green transition and how the country's environment-friendly regulations and subsidies supported economic growth while promoting the adoption of renewable energy.

"This is very encouraging, because of the developing economies of Southeast Asia to be able to take learning points from China's example would give them a lot of confidence to continue pursuing the green transition agenda," she said.

Seah noted ASEAN's underrepresentation in international climate initiatives. She called for increased regional participation and cooperation to enhance ASEAN's climate ambition.

The latest report by global think tank Zero Carbon Analytics, or ZCA, revealed that China has invested over \$2.7 billion in clean energy in ASEAN between 2013

and 2023. China also led in clean energy trade with ASEAN, with trade valued at \$4.3 billion on the back of strong exports of electric vehicles, batteries, solar modules and wind components.

Other key findings of the ZCA report include the need for \$27 billion annually to meet ASEAN's renewable energy demand and the importance of targeted investments in clean technologies like electric vehicle batteries, solar modules, and wind turbines.

Amy Kong, ZCA's oil and gas researcher, said in the webinar that while Japan leads in geothermal and solar investments, China leads in wind and hydropower. Overall, hydropower received the highest amount of investment at \$2.3 billion. But Kong said hydropower alone is not going to meet future energy demand in the region.

"What is the next frontier? Well, we know that for solar, for instance,

the localized cost of electricity is cheaper than both coal and combined cycle gas turbines as of 2024 and with nascent technology like floating solar PV, there's room to scale quickly," Kong said.

The China-initiated Belt and Road Initiative also supports climate and renewable energy investments in ASEAN. According to Chin Yu Sun, a senior researcher at ZCA, their research showed that while renewables only accounted for less than 5 percent of BRI investments in 2014, that share has increased to 30 percent by 2024.

Dinita Setyawati, a senior analyst of global energy policy think tank Ember, said policymakers in the region are also worried about the intermittent supply of solar and wind power. But she said the region can maximize all of these solar and wind potential and make it suitable by matching the supply and demand from the consumers.

War heroes



Soldiers with disabilities participate in the 16th National War Heroes' Day celebrations in Kotte, Sri Lanka, on Monday. It coincides with the end of the country's 30-year conflict in 2009. THILINA KALUTHOTAGE / XINHUA

ifaw 国际爱护动物基金会

CIVCA 中国野生动物保护协会

AD

华北豹
North China leopard

Between heaven and earth,
together with other sentient beings, I live.

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天地与我并生，而万物与我为一
——《庄子·齐物论》

WORLD

Africans urged to jointly respond to import levies

By NDUMISO MLILLO
in Johannesburg
For China Daily

African government officials, scholars and businesspeople have urged African countries to analyze the effect of US tariffs and come up with a joint response, while seeking alternatives.

Mohamed Elkaraksy, special adviser on strategic initiative to the CEO of the African Union Development Agency in Johannesburg, South Africa, said African countries must talk in one voice at G20 and other forums to promote African interests while facing rising trade protectionism from the United States.

"The issue of the rise in protectionism with tariffs imposed by the US will affect African countries because it will reduce the competitiveness of African goods entering the markets," Elkaraksy said.

"The tariffs will increase the cost of African goods and make them less competitive. African countries need to unite and study the impact of the tariffs on their economies and have a united response on this."

African countries have other tools such as the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, which nations could fully operationalize and get benefits from, he said. They should explore opportunities presented by the tariffs and the rise in protectionism, he added.

Sudhir Sooklal, director for multilateral organizations at South Africa's Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, said his country will use the opportunity of the G20 presidency to get more trade and investments.

"We are hoping to see this cascade into positive outcomes and lead to prosperity and a sustainable future for the current and future generations," he said.

"The issue of tariffs is a complex challenge we have to contend with. We are looking forward to engaging all our partners, particularly the US, and we are confident that a constructive approach from both sides will be able to find common ground in order to ensure there is prosperity."

Jabu Khumalo, chief executive of Jabu Khumalo Investments in South Africa, urged African countries to look for opportunities in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world in light of US tariffs.

The businessman has been involved in the export of copper, gold and chrome from South Africa to China since 2018. He said African countries should look for markets for their goods within the continent and beyond, such as BRICS, Asia and Latin America.

"What the US has done makes trade hard," he said. "It is opening opportunities of business between South Africa and China and other BRICS partners. This (tariff issue) has opened opportunities for BRICS members to trade with each other and become stronger. We don't have to rely on the West always; there are opportunities elsewhere."

Siphamandla Zondi, director of the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg, said African countries have to look for opportunities not only across the continent but also in Latin America and Asia.

African countries should exploit opportunities particularly in countries that have been hit hard by US tariffs, Zondi said.

Redefining relations

"As US President Donald Trump is redefining his relationship with the European Union, the bloc is worried where they will move to," he said.

"The EU has to see Africa as a potential (partner) to compensate for what it might lose in its relations with the US and to build a strong relationship with Africa."

"We must be ready to take up opportunities that come with the current disruptions. China was hit by tariffs by the US. It should find Africa ready to take up opportunities that are relocating from the US to elsewhere."

There are more opportunities for trade and investment within G20 member states and the rest of the world, despite rising protectionism from the US, he added.

While seeking alternatives, some African nations have also expressed their desire to meet with the US administration and negotiate on tariffs. South Africa has said it will discuss with the US and is exploring markets in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The US has paused the tariffs for 90 days and it remains uncertain what will happen after that.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



Residents navigate a submerged street after torrential rains inundated parts of Bengaluru, India, on Monday. The Times of India reported on Tuesday that at least three people have died as relentless downpours battered the city, leaving many areas waterlogged. India is hit by heavy rains and flash floods each year during the monsoon season. IDREES MOHAMMED / AFP

EU lowers outlook for economic growth

Bleak trade climate, policy uncertainty cited as tariff tensions weigh on exports

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

The European Commission has sharply marked down its growth forecast for this year and next amid uncertainty over trade and tariff wars that will hurt the European Union's exports.

The commission expects the EU's GDP to grow by only 1.1 percent this year, down from the 1.5 percent expansion it predicted in November. The growth forecast for the 20-member euro zone this year has also been slashed to 0.9 percent from 1.3 percent, according to the Spring 2025 Economic Forecast released on Monday.

"The outlook for growth is revised significantly downward," the commission said. "This largely owes to a weakening global trade outlook and higher trade policy uncertainty."

Valdis Dombrovskis, the commission's executive vice-president and commissioner for economy, said higher tariffs from the United States and trade uncertainty "are weighing on EU exports."

"Risks to the outlook remain tilted to the downside," he said.

Further fragmentation of global trade could mitigate GDP growth and reignite inflationary pressures, according to the forecast. Climate-related disasters are also more frequent and remain a persistent source of downside risk for growth.

The forecast is based on certain assumptions about trade tariffs.

Duties on US imports of goods from the EU, and virtually all other trade partners, were assumed in the model to remain at 10 percent — the level applied on April 9 — with the exception of higher tariffs on steel and aluminum and cars at 25 percent, as well as tariff exemptions on certain products such as pharmaceuticals and microprocessors.

The commission said the tariff rates eventually agreed upon by China and the US on May 12 have turned out to be lower than those assumed in the forecast, but still high enough not to invalidate the assumption of a hit to the US-China trade relationship.

Geneva talks

The forecast was originally set to be released on Friday but was delayed until Monday after China and the US agreed in Geneva to cut each other's tariffs by 115 percent, prompting the commission to revise the forecast.

The EU's exports are expected to grow by only 0.7 percent this year because of low global demand for goods, the commission said. Next year, export growth is set to accelerate to 2.1 percent. Both are down from the 2.2 percent and 3.0 percent growth, respectively, in its November forecast.

The EU's largest economy Germany, which has suffered two consecu-

five years of recession, is expected to have zero growth this year compared with the November forecast of 0.7 percent. But the growth will be 1.1 percent next year.

The forecast for France and Italy, the bloc's second- and third-largest economies, have also been marked down from 0.8 percent to 0.6 percent and from 1.0 percent to 0.7 percent, respectively, for this year.

US Vice-President JD Vance said on Sunday that he was hopeful about "long-term trade advantages" between the EU and the US, ahead of a meeting in Rome with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

"I think we'll have a great conversation and hopefully it will be the beginning of some long-term trade negotiations and some long-term trade advantages between both Europe and the United States," Vance said.

Ignacio Garcia Bercero, a non-resident fellow at Bruegel, a Brussels-based think tank, said that in trade talks with the US, the EU can only consider offering tariff reduction on a most-favored-nation basis and cannot accept an agreement that would maintain US tariffs at higher levels than EU tariffs for almost all products — referring to the 10 percent tariff by the US in contrast to the bloc's tariff of below 2 percent.

"The EU, therefore, should challenge the 10 percent tariffs via the World Trade Organization, preferably as part of a broader coalition," Bercero, a former EU trade negotiator, wrote on Bruegel's website.

Briefly

JAPAN

US must lift duties, reiterates trade envoy

Japan's top trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, said on Tuesday there was no change in Tokyo's stance of demanding an elimination of the United States' tariffs in bilateral trade negotiations. Tokyo will not rush into clinching a trade deal if doing so risked hurting the country's interests, Akazawa said. "The slew of US tariffs including reciprocal tariffs as well as those on automobiles, car parts, steel and aluminium, are regrettable. There's no change to our stance of seeking a review, which is to say an elimination, of them," he said. The two countries held working-level trade talks in Washington on Monday, he said.

SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan, India to pull out troops by end May

Pakistan and India have agreed to withdraw troop reinforcements deployed during their recent conflict back to their peacetime positions by the end of this month, a senior Pakistani security official said on Tuesday. "Troops will be withdrawn to pre-conflict positions by the end of May," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media. Both countries agreed on a phased withdrawal of the additional troops and weaponry deployed, mostly on the Line of Control, the official said. Meanwhile, India said on Tuesday it would resume a daily border ceremony that it briefly halted following the conflict. Pakistan said it never stopped the ceremony, with its troops marching on its side of the border alone.

UNITED STATES

Trump signs legislation outlawing 'revenge porn'

US President Donald Trump signed a bill on Monday making it a federal crime to post "revenge porn" — whether it is real or generated by artificial intelligence. The Take It Down Act criminalizes nonconsensual publication of intimate images, while also mandating their removal from online platforms. "With the rise of AI image generation, countless women have been harassed with deepfakes and other explicit images distributed against their will," Trump said at a signing ceremony in the White House. "Anyone who intentionally distributes explicit images without the subject's consent will face up to three years in prison."

VENEZUELA

Flights from Colombia halted over 'conspiracy'

Venezuela's Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said on Monday he has ordered flights from Colombia suspended after the arrests of 38 people over allegations of "conspiracy." "We have decided to immediately suspend all air traffic between Venezuela and Colombia," Cabello said. "We have discovered a new plot of conspiracy and terrorism. We have captured a group of Venezuelans who were returning to the country with explosive artifacts," he said. Colombia's Foreign Ministry said it had been informed about the flight suspension by Venezuela's government but had not yet received information about any detained Colombians.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Canvas of colors



The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney bursts into vibrant colors during a media preview for this year's Vivid Sydney festival on Monday. BRENDON THORNE VIA GETTY IMAGES

UN releases Palace Museum centennial stamps

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

The United Nations celebrated the upcoming centennial of Beijing's Palace Museum with a stamp launch and exhibition opening at its New York headquarters on Monday, celebrating cultural exchange and the historic legacy of the former imperial palace.

The event, titled "Endless Vitality: UN Stamp Launch & Palace Museum Exhibition", was co-organized by the Palace Museum and the UN Chinese Book Club, with support from the Global Sustainable Development Goals and Leadership Development Center.

It featured a special stamp series issued by the UN Postal Administration to mark the museum's 100th anniversary and International Museum Day.

Geng Shuang, the charge d'affaires of China's permanent mission to the

UN, highlighted the museum's global cultural significance during the opening ceremony.

"The UN Postal Administration is issuing a special event sheet of stamps of the Palace Museum, not only to honor the museum's cultural and historical significance, but also to showcase the enduring charm of Chinese culture to the world," Geng said.

The stamps feature 10 floral designs inspired by the museum's vast collection of artifacts, which include millions of Chinese and international relics reflecting centuries of cross-cultural exchange, he said.

The Palace Museum, once China's Forbidden City, served as the residence and administrative hub for 24 emperors during the Ming and Qing dynasties from the 15th century until the early 20th century.

"Displayed side by side, these artifacts of diverse origins and styles are quite a sight to behold," Geng said.

"They bear witness to the centuries of interaction and fusion between Eastern and Western cultures. They also remind later generations that only by embracing openness and inclusiveness, and seeking harmony without uniformity, can we foster peaceful coexistence and synergy among different civilizations."

Atul Khare, under-secretary-general for the UN Department of Operational Support, recounted his visit in 2007 to the Palace Museum while serving as head of peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste.

Message of peace

"The museum in the last hundred years has been bringing Chinese culture and civilization to the world at large with the message of peace, prosperity, harmony and innovation. And therefore, we congratulate the museum on its hundredth anniversary," Khare told China Daily.

At Monday's ceremony, Khare welcomed Palace Museum dele-

gates, emphasizing museums as "places where culture lives" and critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. "Museums make cities vibrant by being spaces where culture and community thrive," he said.

With more than 120 diplomats attending, the event opened with *Celestial Melodies*, a performance blending traditional Chinese instruments with electronic music. It concluded with a stamp unveiling and interactive cultural exchanges.

Wang Yuegong, deputy director of the Palace Museum, highlighted its global partnerships and innovations in cultural preservation. "Our creative products, inspired by the museum's collections, promote green initiatives, accessibility, and rural revitalization," Wang said.

The museum has shared its sustainability practices at UN climate conferences and UNESCO forums,



From right: Atul Khare, under-secretary-general of the United Nations; Geng Shuang, charge d'affaires of China's permanent mission to the UN; Eliot Minchenberg, director of UNESCO's New York office; and Wang Yuegong, deputy director of the Palace Museum unveil the UN stamp sheet commemorating the centennial of the Palace Museum, in New York on Monday. LIAO PAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

aiming to "contribute Chinese solutions to global heritage preservation," he said.

The Palace Museum, a UNESCO

World Heritage Site since 1987, will mark its 100th anniversary later this year. The exhibition will also tour Europe this year.

BUSINESS

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Tariff rollbacks, consumption could lift GDP

IMF official: China likely to contribute around quarter of global growth in 2025

By ZHOU LANXU and LIU ZHIHUA

China's economy is expected to contribute around a quarter of global growth this year, said a senior official with the International Monetary Fund.

And if recent tariff rollbacks and strong first-quarter growth momentum can be maintained, the Chinese economy may grow even faster this year than previously anticipated.

The IMF encourages China to launch even more economic stimulus measures to address the immediate challenges of subdued demand, which could be exacerbated by the ongoing external shocks, said Marshall Mills, the IMF's senior resident representative in China.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily on the sidelines of the 2025 Tsinghua PBCSF Global Finance Forum over the weekend, Mills said there could be an upward revision of the fund's 2025 economic growth forecast for China, citing stronger-than-expected first-quarter GDP growth and recent tariff reductions between China and the United States.



Marshall Mills

"With these positive developments, there is a potential upside. We'll have to look at all the factors together and provide an updated forecast in due course," Mills said, adding that China's economy is expected to contribute around 25 percent of global growth this year.

In April, the IMF's World Economic Outlook revised down China's GDP growth forecast for this year to 4 percent from 4.6 percent, as part of its broader downgrades that cut the global growth forecast to 2.8 percent from 3.3 percent amid a swift escalation of trade tensions. The fund is scheduled to provide its WEO update in July.

Mills said the easing of tariffs between China and the US and their efforts to engage in further trade talks were in sync with the fund's overall encouragement for countries to work constructively together and ensure a level playing field in trading relations.

"We encourage countries to continue to pursue trade settlements to reduce trade tensions and uncertainty, which is costly," he said, adding that all countries should preserve openness in trade.

The lingering external uncertainties have increased the urgency for China to go further on stimulus measures to shore up domestic

demand, Mills said, adding that fiscal measures in this regard should be carried out with a "the sooner the better" urgency.

The desirable fiscal moves should be led by the central government and include reforming the fiscal system to strengthen the social safety net — especially for vulnerable groups — as well as "forceful action" to correct property sector problems, he said.

"We've recommended that the central government step in with significant resources to resolve the problem of presold but unfinished housing, either through financing the completion or compensating at least partly those still unable to occupy the homes," Mills said.

Another key possible step would be for local governments, perhaps with central government backing, to purchase some of the completed but not yet sold housing inventory and resell it to vulnerable, low-income groups, he said.

If the challenge of subdued inflation persists, authorities can continue down the road of monetary policy relaxation, following up on the recent easing, Mills said.

"The subdued inflation, in our view, is a result of weak domestic demand. We do believe that decisive, forceful policy action can address this problem and that inflation can return to healthy levels (in China)," he said.

On the broader impact on individuals as a result of trade tensions, Mills emphasized the need for targeted support measures to assist those affected.

In the medium term, China needs to deepen reforms to create a more stable, predictable regulatory environment for the private sector and provide it with a level playing field, especially in the services sector, Mills added. Such efforts are crucial for improving China's productivity and growth outlook, which still faces headwinds due to factors including population aging despite the country's recent advancements in artificial intelligence.

Mills said that China has a growing role in the international monetary system via the increased use of the Chinese yuan globally.

"China has made substantial progress in the international use of the yuan, particularly in trade," he said, which is a market-driven outcome that is likely to continue as the country's role in the global economy and trade continues to grow.

Tan Guoling contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Safety preparations



Technicians from the Houma North Locomotive Depot of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd conduct maintenance checks on braking systems, sanding devices, wipers, lighting and high-voltage equipment, in order to safeguard railway transportation during the upcoming rainy season.

MOU ZUNZHI, WANG ZHENGZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

MNCs foresee tailwinds for vibrancy

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The momentum generated by government policies aimed at stabilizing foreign investment, combined with the rapid growth of green and artificial intelligence-driven economies, will deliver strong tailwinds for foreign companies in China this year, said foreign business executives.

With rising global economic headwinds and uncertainty over United States' trade policies, many global enterprises are opting to consolidate their presence in China, with plans to maintain or expand investment.

China's stable and business-friendly environment supported a modest rebound in foreign direct investment in March, with actual FDI inflows into the Chinese mainland increasing by 13.2 percent year-on-year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

Marelli Holdings Co Ltd, a Saitama, Japan-headquartered multinational automotive parts manufacturer with more than 50 manufacturing facilities across the world, will expand its engineering team from 800 to 1,000 in China over the next three years.

"Many opportunities arise from Chinese automakers' rapid shift toward electrification and intelligence, especially in the form of software-defined vehicles, which are setting new benchmarks for speed, scale and innovation," said David Slump, the group's president and CEO.

With China and the US agreeing to de-escalate trade tensions last week, Slump said that these two

countries are major markets for Marelli.

"We are closely monitoring and assessing the situation, and are committed to minimizing any impact on our operations and customers," said Slump. He added that the company is already exporting advanced products and solutions from China to other markets, including Europe, Mexico and Southeast Asia.

Also upbeat about the Chinese market, British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca announced in March an investment of \$2.5 billion to establish in Beijing its sixth global strategic R&D center, and further expand its biotech innovation partnerships and local manufacturing capabilities.

The new facility will advance early-stage research and clinical development and will be enabled by a new AI and data science laboratory.

Susan Galbraith, executive vice-president, oncology R&D, AstraZeneca, said that having two of its six global strategic R&D centers in China reflects the group's confidence in China's world-class biomedical innovation ecosystem and reinforces the nation's critical role in its global R&D strategy.

Ji Wenhua, a professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies, which is part of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that China's well-developed industrial bases, strong supply chain resilience and policy emphasis on innovation continue to make it an attractive destination for global capital.

According to China's 2025

Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment, the country will support pilot regions in effectively implementing opening-up policies related to areas such as value-added telecommunication, biotechnology and wholly foreign-owned hospitals, providing whole-journey services for foreign-invested projects in these sectors.

The action plan also supports foreign businesses to participate in China's new industrialization, with a focus on high-tech fields. Global capital has been welcomed in service sectors such as elderly care, culture and tourism, sports, healthcare, vocational education and finance.

As part of its strategy to strengthen operations in China, US express transportation service provider FedEx Corp announced in mid-May that it would enhance its international export services from Shanghai.

The cutoff times for same-day outbound shipments from Shanghai to Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, India and Africa will be further extended.

The foreign trade value of foreign-invested businesses reached 4.1 trillion yuan (\$567.51 billion) in China between January and April, up 1.9 percent year-on-year, accounting for 29 percent of China's total foreign trade value, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

In the meantime, Jiangsu province, a major hub for foreign-invested companies, recorded 864.25 billion yuan in foreign trade value, up 7.2 percent year-on-year, according to Nanjing Customs.

NDRC approves key infra projects

China's top economic regulator approved 27 fixed-asset investment projects worth 573.7 billion yuan (\$79.8 billion) in the first four months.

The projects primarily focused on energy, agriculture, forestry and water conservation, as well as high technology, Li Chao, a spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic regulator, said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

In April alone, the NDRC approved eight fixed-asset investment projects worth 377.1 billion yuan, Li said.

China will update the catalog of industries where foreign investment will be encouraged, opening more sectors, including advanced manufacturing and the digital economy, Li said, adding that China has steadfastly advanced its reform and opening-up policy for more than 40 years, remaining an ideal, safe and enabling investment destination for foreign enterprises.

However, current unilateral and protectionist measures adopted by certain countries have compelled businesses to take sides and make choices that do not align with economic principles, causing significant disruptions to the normal operations of multinational companies, Li said, urging relevant countries to promptly return to the correct path of multilateralism and free trade, working together to inject certainty into global economic development.

Li said the NDRC has coordinated with relevant departments to accelerate the introduction of several measures aimed at stabilizing employment and economic development while promoting high-quality growth. Currently, relevant departments are working diligently to implement these measures, with most policies expected to be in place by the end of June.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Briefly

China cuts gasoline, diesel retail prices

China reduced the retail prices of gasoline and diesel on Tuesday to reflect recent changes in international oil prices. Gasoline prices will be slashed by 230 yuan (\$32) per metric ton and diesel prices by 220 yuan per ton, said the National Development and Reform Commission. China's three biggest oil companies, China National Petroleum Corp, China Petrochemical Corp and China National Offshore Oil Corp, as well as other oil refineries, have been directed to effectively organize the production and transportation of refined oil products to ensure stable supply.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 15 pips to 7.1931 against the US dollar on Tuesday, 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

Commercial vehicle safety gets a reboot with smart features

By LI JIAYING
lijiaying@chinadaily.com.cn

Targeting long-standing issues such as high accident rates, China is accelerating the intelligent upgrade of its commercial vehicle sector by strengthening safety regulations and introducing new technical standards.

In a move that underscores this shift, the Ministry of Transport recently released a slew of revised technical standards including the safety technical conditions for operational trucks. The updated requirements stipulate that starting July 1, 2025, all newly manufactured operational trucks must be equipped with advanced safety technologies such as electronic stability control and autonomous emergency braking systems (AEBS).

AEBS, a key component of active vehicle safety, enables vehicles to automatically apply brakes in emergency situations and serves as a foundational technology for advanced intelligent driving.

According to Gao Deng, chief automotive industry analyst at Guolian

Minsheng Securities, the policy shift represents not only a mere technical upgrade, but also a fundamental transformation in automotive safety philosophy.

"In the past, active safety features were often used by automakers as marketing tools to differentiate their products," Gao said. "But going forward, they will become baseline requirements for market entry and product compliance. This shift will redefine the competitive rules of China's automotive market."

Echoing the regulatory update, a recent transport safety assessment program (CT-SAP) was released by China Merchants Testing Vehicle Technology Research Institute (CMVR), China Road Transport Association and other institutions this month.

Aiming to address safety challenges faced by smart commercial vehicles in an active way, the safety assessment program builds an evaluation framework based on four core dimensions: driver monitoring, visibility monitoring, driving safety and emergency safety.

"The release of CT-SAP will



An intelligent driver assistant system is demonstrated during an auto expo in Shanghai earlier this year. FANG ZHE / XINHUA

directly accelerate the standardization of active safety technologies in commercial vehicles," said Shi Jianeng, vice-president of Chinese automaker Dongfeng Liuzhou Motor's research institute.

"Active safety is not just a technical upgrade. It signals a shift in governance logic across the industry," Shi said, adding that through intelli-

gent perception, precise decision-making, and proactive intervention, it can efficiently improve risk control and reshape the industry's safety ecosystem.

Liu Jian, general manager of the intelligent driving division at CMVR, highlighted three core features of the newly released assessment program. Firstly, it focuses on scenario-based

evaluation, specifically addressing safety challenges in trunk logistics and urban delivery. Secondly, it puts emphasis on complex conditions such as low-light environments during early morning, dusk, or nighttime. And thirdly, testing under actual vehicle load conditions, targeting braking and emergency avoidance performance during full-load and trailer operations.

Driven by both regulatory upgrades and market demand for smarter safety solutions, the commercial vehicle active safety market is poised for growth. According to market consultancy QYResearch, the global market for active safety systems in commercial vehicles is expected to have reached \$4.5 billion in 2024 and will grow at a compound annual rate of 3.8 percent to \$5.8 billion by 2031.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS



Visitors check out heavy trucks powered by CATL batteries during an event in Datong, Shanxi province, on Sunday. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

CATL lands \$4.6b in HK float

Battery giant eyes bigger green role with its debut, bourse's largest so far this year

By CHENG YU in Beijing and ZHU XINGXIN in Datong, Shanxi

Shares of Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd surged 16.43 percent as the Chinese mainland battery giant debuted on the Hong Kong bourse on Tuesday. It raised HK\$35.7 billion (\$4.6 billion) via an initial public offering, which has become the largest IPO in Hong Kong so far this year.

The stock closed at HK\$306.2 per share, which industry experts believe underscores investor confidence in the world's top electric vehicle battery supplier despite mounting geopolitical headwinds and intensifying industry competition.

CATL Chairman and CEO Robin Zeng said at the listing ceremony

that the company's float in Hong Kong marks a broader integration into the global capital market and a new start for advancing the zero-carbon economy.

"CATL is not just a battery component manufacturer — we are a provider of integrated system solutions and are committed to becoming a zero-carbon technology company," Zeng said.

The company drew strong interest from global investors. Its IPO was priced at the top of the range and attracted cornerstone commitments from sovereign wealth funds and major institutions, such as the Kuwait Investment Authority, Sinopec, UBS Asset Management, Hillhouse, Oaktree and Canada's RBC. Zhang Xiang, secretary-general of

the International Intelligent Mobility Association, said: "This IPO gives CATL vital access to foreign exchange reserves — crucial for sustaining multi-billion-euro investments across Europe. It also further strengthens CATL to push global expansion."

CATL said proceeds from the listing will primarily fund its European build-out, with 90 percent earmarked for its Hungary plant — a 7.3 billion euro (\$8.21 billion) project slated to become Europe's largest EV battery facility. The factory, located in Debrecen, is expected to begin trial production by late 2025 with an annual capacity of 100 gigawatt-hours.

CATL is also scaling up operations at its Thuringia plant in Germany and advancing another battery project in Spain in partnership with Stellantis.

In the domestic market, the company launched a standardized battery pack for battery swap-enabled

heavy-duty trucks over the weekend in Datong, Shanxi province.

Yang Jun, CEO of Qiji Energy, a unit of CATL, said that the battery swap block has the industry's longest level of lifespan and allows vehicle operators to choose the number of packs they want.

"We have now launched more than 30 battery swap-enabled heavy truck models with more than a dozen automakers," Yang said.

"Compared to fuel-powered heavy trucks, those using Qiji Energy's chassis battery swap technology can save 60,000 yuan (\$8,320) per 100,000 kilometers of operation."

Zeng from CATL also predicted on Saturday that half of China's sales of heavy trucks could be electric vehicles by 2028, up from 10 percent in 2024.

Contact the writers at chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Singapore seeks greater capital market ties

By LUO WEITENG in Shenzhen, Guangdong sophiatuo@chinadailyhk.com



China's economy is undergoing a historic transition to high-quality and innovation-led development. The next global champions will come from this region."

Loh Boon Chye, CEO of Singapore Exchange

As China's push for new quality productive forces gains momentum, Singapore has doubled down on efforts at cross-border capital market collaboration to make it more relevant than ever to the next big story unfolding in the world's second largest economy, said Loh Boon Chye, chairman of the World Federation of Exchanges and CEO of Singapore Exchange.

Over the past two years, the China-Singapore exchange-traded fund (ETF), a telling example of closer ties between the two economies' capital markets, has seen its combined assets under management grow by three times year-on-year to nearly 630 million Singapore dollars (\$487 million), Loh told China Daily in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the 2025 Global Investor Conference in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, on Monday.

The cross-border ETF program, allowing investor access to ETFs cross-listed between the Shenzhen, Shanghai and Singapore bourses, has launched nine ETF products as of April since it was set up in 2021. The ETF scheme is a strong response to growing global investor appetite for the emerging industries of strategic importance in China.

It also offers a platform for Chinese investors to tap into the Singapore and Southeast Asian markets with expanding global reach, as nearly 30 percent of listed companies by market capitalization at the Singapore bourse are from outside Singapore and about 35 percent of the listed firms are international players, Loh said.

Loh said he expects to offer more, as China's great transition to high-quality growth spells huge opportunities for those with the foresight to jump onto the bandwagon.

"China's economy is undergoing a historic transition to high-quality and innovation-led development. The next global champions will come from this region," he said in a

keynote speech at the conference that was hosted by the Shenzhen Stock Exchange and which saw nearly 400 participants.

"Cross-border collaboration multiplies the impact of innovation, where one market may offer capital, another offers scale, and where one brings technological expertise, another brings demand," Loh said.

"This is where Singapore and China can do more together to support the development of these new quality productive forces. China offers depth and scale. Singapore brings connectivity and international reach."

At a critical historical juncture where divergence and fragmentation cast a shadow over globalization, Loh believes Singapore has what it takes to be a "launchpad" for China to the world, being a part of the good journey of the country's homegrown companies in their quest for business expansion and global significance.

Loh said he is betting on closer cooperation on index development with the Shenzhen and Shanghai exchanges to cover some of the largest economies and biggest companies across Asia, and pave the way for the rollout of more ETFs based on these broad-based or sector-specific indexes.

Pelliot files IPO for Hong Kong listing

By WANG ZHUOQIONG wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Pelliot, a manufacturer of outdoor sports apparel and equipment, is aiming to become the first listed company among its peers in China, after it recently filed for an initial public offering on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

The move is believed to be part of the company's efforts to further capitalize on China's surging outdoor sports trend.

Pelliot has recorded rapid revenue growth over the past two years. According to the filing, its

revenue grossed 1.77 billion yuan (\$245.1 million) in 2024, with a profitability higher than many big names globally.

The company also reported that its revenue rose from 378.5 million yuan in 2022 to 908.1 million yuan in 2023, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 122 percent over the past two years.

The company's direct-to-consumer (DTC) strategy has been a key growth driver. Its online DTC revenue grew from 331.1 million yuan in 2022 to 1.35 billion yuan in 2024, accounting for 87.5 percent and 76.5 percent of total revenue over the

past three years, respectively.

Profitability metrics have also steadily improved. The group's cost of sales ratio declined from 45.7 percent in 2022 to 40.4 percent in 2024, while net profit surged from 24.3 million yuan in 2022 to 283.1 million yuan in 2024.

If successful, the IPO will mark a milestone in China's outdoor gear industry and could set the stage for further capital market activity among domestic sportswear and lifestyle brands.

The company, as of Dec 31, operated 14 directly owned stores and 132 partner stores, primarily located in

first- and second-tier cities in China. It strategically places stores in prime retail locations such as shopping malls, department stores and specialty shops.

The Chinese outdoor apparel market is undergoing structural growth, driven by shifting consumer preferences, supportive policies and product innovation. According to consultancy Frost & Sullivan, the high-performance outdoor apparel segment reached 102.7 billion yuan in 2024, with a CAGR of 13.8 percent. It is projected to more than double, reaching 215.8 billion yuan by 2029.

This expansion is fueled by rising domestic consumption, policy support and technological advancement, it added.

Fragrance of love



Florists arrange themed bouquets at a market in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Monday, as buyers flock to make purchases ahead of peak seasonal demand triggered by May 20, or 520, which is homophonous with "I love you" in Mandarin.

LI JIAXIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

High tension



Technicians from State Grid Suqian Power Supply Co install power lines for a 220-kilovolt power transmission project in Suqian, Jiangsu province — a project to elevate the city's peak summer load. Once operational, it will help eliminate the only medium and long-term Level 5 risk in Suqian's power grid, guaranteeing the grid's stable operation. WU DI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Enhanced global energy cooperation seen as key

By LIU YUKUN liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Calls for strengthened international partnerships took center stage on the opening day of the World Gas Conference (WGC) in Beijing, as industry leaders and policymakers emphasized collective action to address energy security, affordability and climate goals.

The speakers emphasized the importance of gas as a crucial transitional fuel amid increasing pressure to shift the global energy landscape from fossil fuel dominance to a new energy paradigm.

The conference, dubbed the "Olympics of the gas sector", has drawn over 3,000 delegates and over 30,000 professional visitors from 70 countries to discuss natural gas' strategic role in global decarbonization. The four-day event is being hosted by the International Gas Union (IGU) and marks the conference's first landing in China.

Meg O'Neill, CEO of Australia's

Woodside Energy, highlighted rising energy demand driven by population and GDP growth, particularly in emerging economies. She said the supply challenge lies in delivering abundant, cost-competitive energy while addressing emissions — a role where natural gas is pivotal.

Tan Sri Tengku Muhammad Taufik, president and group CEO of Malaysia's Petronas, noted challenges in the gas field market in Asia due to income disparities and affordability challenges. He said China's leading investments in natural gas, integral to its energy transition, offered references for global practices.

China's gas consumption has surged from below 200 billion cubic meters a decade ago to more than 436.05 billion cubic meters in 2024, with an 8.4 percent average annual growth rate, according to IGU data. Gas now accounts for 9 percent of China's energy mix.

Dai Houliang, chairman of State-owned China National Petroleum Corp, described gas as a "clean, efficient energy source cen-

tral to green transition and global energy stability." He outlined plans to minimize emissions across gas production and use, accelerate integration with renewables and promote localized gas-fired power projects.

He said CNPC will also prioritize cross-disciplinary research and development to advance technologies like carbon capture, utilization and storage.

"Strengthening multilateral trade systems, expanding infrastructure connectivity and collectively enhancing supply chain resilience, are vital to the industry's sustainable development," he added.

Dai said CNPC is committed to further engaging in global climate governance and supporting global carbon neutrality objectives, showcasing its green commitments to benefit a broader range of countries and users.

Wan Jinsong, deputy head of the National Energy Administration, noted significant progress in gas infrastructure in China, including a near-complete

national pipeline network and breakthroughs in deepwater and unconventional resource extraction.

"Further efforts are expected to foster global collaboration under four pillars: ensuring energy access, prioritizing ecology, digitalizing energy systems, and improving multilateral governance," Wan said.

"We need to uphold open cooperation and mutual benefit, working together to build a safe, efficient, clean and low-carbon global energy system," he said.

IGU Chair Li Yalan said that in the face of multiple challenges such as climate change, energy security and geopolitical issues, natural gas, with its abundant resources, cleanliness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, is becoming an indispensable pillar in the global energy mix.

"As the world's largest importer of natural gas and liquefied natural gas, China's development experience is increasingly drawing international attention," she said.

BUSINESSFOCUS

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German enterprises create 'dough' in Taicang

City in Suzhou a 'bakery' of success for over 550 firms from Germany

By LIU WEIFENG and CHENG YU in Taicang, Jiangsu

Just before dawn in Taicang, a county-level city in East China's Suzhou, Jiangsu province, hot dough at Brotecke — a beloved German bakery — is kneaded into loaves and other shapes by a master baker.

Just a few kilometers away, newly built auto parts come to life at a factory of German supplier Schaeffler, where finished products are spirited along spotless floors, moving between vehicles via robotic arms.

"Doing business in Taicang is like baking German bread. Not only does the business grow bigger, it gets more aromatic," said Armin Kress, vice-president of strategy and processes at Schaeffler Greater China, in very good Chinese.

Over the past three decades, Taicang, just 800 square km and home to around 800,000 people, has gradually gathered more than 550 German enterprises in total, making it a true home for German businesses.

The No 103 bus route through Taicang tells the story in miniature. Each stop bears the name of a German company, which include Kern-Liebers, Trumpf and TOX.

Within a four-km radius of the Kern-Liebers stop, over 40 foreign-invested enterprises, mostly from Germany, have established operations.

These German firms, occupying just 0.24 percent of the city's land, have contributed about 8 percent of Taicang's GDP.

Schaeffler led the way in 1998, when it established its first Chinese plant in the city. In an interview with China Up-Close, a major business omnimedia column of China Daily, Kress gestured to rows of conveyor belts where cobalt-blue automated guided vehicles ferried raw coils into robotic presses.

"This was our very first factory in China, both our oldest and our newest," Kress said, recalling when German engineers calibrated bearings by hand and trained local workers on delicate assembly techniques.

Over the past three decades, Schaeffler has reinvested 13 times, pouring more than 11 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion) into expansion, he said.

"Today, the site's annual output tops 20 billion yuan, and a new factory wing — completed in March 2023 — melds the company's original workshops with state-of-the-art technologies," he said.

The new facility was designed from the ground up to manufacture the latest products. Among them is the company's latest coaxial reducers for electric vehicles — components that Kress described as "like shifting gears, but much smarter".

They take the motor's high-speed energy and fine-tune it to the perfect wheel speed, making EVs smoother, quieter and more efficient.

That ability to innovate locally rather than simply import products

has been key to Taicang's appeal.

"When China's EV boom took off, Schaeffler didn't just follow — it led, launching and mass-producing the new gearboxes right here in Taicang. Now they're going global, alongside our Chinese clients," he said.

Taicang's rise owes much to a pragmatic local government that understands when to step in and when to leave businesses to their own businesses.

According to Tomas Herman, deputy general manager of German auto supplier Brose Taicang Automotive Systems Co Ltd, when applying earlier this year for green-factory certification, the company encountered some questions.

"We received all the answers the next day," he emphasized. That "unseen stewardship", as he said, has fostered a deep trust.

"That's also the reason why we have three factories. Actually in Taicang, this is one of the three, and we believe that we will have a bright future in Taicang," he said.

It took 14 years — from 1993 to 2007 — for Taicang to land its first 100 German firms. But momentum picked up fast. The 400th German firm arrived in 2021. The 500th German firm touched down in January 2024.

Government incentives have added further fuel. In January, Suzhou held a pivotal industrialization conference, reaffirming its commitment to becoming a "global leader in smart manufacturing". The city set its sights on ambitious goals, including surpassing 4.8 trillion yuan in industrial output by 2025 and 10 percent annual growth in industrial investment.

This is also in line with China's goal of further deepening reforms comprehensively, expanding high-standard opening-up and building a modern industrial system, as proposed at the 2024 Central Economic Work Conference in December.

Liu Xiaotao, then Party secretary of Suzhou, said: "Suzhou has a complete industrial system, abundant innovation resources, diverse application scenarios and an excellent business environment. In the face of new industrial and tech trends, as well as changes in the international environment, Suzhou has stronger competitive advantages and should boldly take on greater responsibilities."

In January, the Suzhou government announced new policies to support foreign-invested enterprises, including a maximum support of 10 million yuan in establishing corporate research institutes and increasing R&D investment in the city.

The city also vowed tax breaks for foreign manufacturing enterprises reinvesting profits, further sweetening the pot for companies.

At a separate conference meeting with German companies, Liu said cooperation between Suzhou and Germany has a solid foundation and abundant opportunities for growth, adding that as Suzhou advances new industrialization, the city looks forward to further strengthening ties with German companies.

"Suzhou will also continue to expand high-standard opening-up and actively create a first-class business environment to offer favorable conditions for German enterprises to thrive," he said.



Above: Two German businessmen talk at the German Center in Taicang, Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in 2025.

Below left: German visitors make zongzi in Taicang in 2018.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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Armin Kress, vice-president of strategy and processes at Schaeffler Greater China

Online
See more by scanning the code.



By CHENG YU and LIU WEIFENG in Taicang, Jiangsu

German auto parts provider Schaeffler is betting big on the Chinese market, with plans to double its business in the country over the next six to seven years, even with rising global trade uncertainties.

Zhang Yilin, CEO of Schaeffler Greater China, said: "We are now investing around 2 billion yuan (\$280 million) in China annually and will no doubt keep investing as long as there are great opportunities."

Zhang, who joined the company two decades ago, recalled starting with a modest team of just over 100 people generating 300 million yuan in sales.

"Now, we've grown into a major engine for global growth. With the merger of Vitesco, a German automotive supplier for drivetrain and powertrain technologies, our capabilities are stronger than ever — it's a case of strong meets strong."

Zhang made the remarks at the

Shanghai Auto Show last month, where the German company showcased a lineup of new electrified and intelligent mobility solutions, many tailored specifically for the Chinese market — a clear nod to its growing focus on local innovation.

This year also marks Schaeffler's 30th anniversary in China, where it now employs 19,000 people across 17 factories and six research and development centers.

"China is no longer just a growth market. It's becoming the epicenter of future automotive technology," said Matthias Zink, CEO of Schaeffler's automotive technologies division. "We're not just a component supplier anymore — we're a diversified tech company."

Schaeffler's push aligns with broader global trends. The International Energy Agency said electric cars are projected to account for over 40 percent of global car sales by 2030. In China, the share could reach 80 percent, cementing its

Schaeffler revved up on China auto parts mkt



A view of Schaeffler's booth at an exhibition in Shanghai in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

position as the world's largest and most dynamic EV market.

"We believe the future of mobility is being written in China," Zink added.

Klaus Rosenfeld, CEO of Schaeffler, said: "We have achieved very positive momentum here in the Chinese market over the past three decades and we are building here for the long term."

In March 2025, Rosenfeld was among over 40 international business leaders who met with Chinese top leadership in Beijing to discuss enhancing business cooperation and addressing economic challenges in China.

"With strong R&D and production capabilities, Schaeffler will continue delivering cutting-edge technology to our key customers here — and from China to the world," he said.

Schaeffler's global ambitions took a major step forward last October following its merger with German drivetrain specialist Vites-

co Technologies. The combined group now boasts pro forma annual sales of 25 billion euros (\$28.19 billion) and a global workforce of around 120,000 across more than 250 locations.

"The merger with Vitesco has further strengthened our capabilities, making us more robust alongside our increasingly powerful clients," said Zhang.

Following the merger, Schaeffler is pushing a "local for local" strategy to better adapt to regional needs — and China is leading the way.

"More than 90 percent of our R&D and production for automotive products in China is already localized," said Zhang. "This isn't just a China strategy — the same applies to the Americas and Asia-Pacific. We're giving regions more autonomy to tailor their own road maps."

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COMMENT

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Latest achievements of Chinese companies show US' tech curbs a futile proposition

The US Department of Commerce has just changed the wording of its May 12 news release on AI chip export control guidance from "using Huawei Ascend chips anywhere in the world violates US export controls" to "alerts industry to the risks of using PRC advanced-computing ICs, including specific Huawei Ascend chips".

The change of wording within a few days, though an apparent toning down after the recent high-level China-US trade talks in Geneva, does not change the discriminatory and market-distorting nature of the US guidance.

In recent years, the United States has implemented unilateral and protectionist policies, and waged a chip war against China, abusing export controls by tightening restrictions on Chinese chips based on groundless accusations. Yet, as the chip war plays out, it has become increasingly apparent that trying to trip up others doesn't make oneself run faster, instead it only prompts others to run faster.

In a recent interview with CNN, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said that the restrictions imposed by the US on China in technology sectors were having the opposite effect to that intended as they had forced China to go full speed ahead in terms of chip manufacturing and other fields. "We made clear to them that they needed to make their own chips, and they're making great progress on doing that," he said.

On Monday, Huawei Technologies Co officially unveiled its personal computers powered by its self-developed operating system, Harmony-OS. The remarkable progress was widely perceived as posing a challenge to the decades-old dominance by Microsoft's Windows and Apple's macOS operating systems.

On the same day, Xiaomi Corp confirmed that it will unveil its 3 nanometer Xring O1 chip on Thursday, after more than four years' intensive R&D efforts, becoming only the fourth company in the world — after Apple, Qualcomm, and MediaTek — to launch a smartphone processor designed in-house using the advanced 3nm node.

These achievements from leading Chinese

high-tech companies are the latest proof of China's unswerving pursuit of technological innovation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the US-instigated chip war has failed to curb China's high-tech development, and that instead, by prompting the nation to demonstrate its fighting spirit, it has served to intensify the country's efforts to join the ranks of the world's most innovative countries, with self-reliance and strength in science and technology.

It is high time the US woke up to the truth that its short-sighted tech blockade will not stop China's innovation. The country will not be deterred by intimidation, or cowed by pressure. It will meet obstacles and difficulties head on, harnessing the nation's indomitable fighting spirit to open up new horizons.

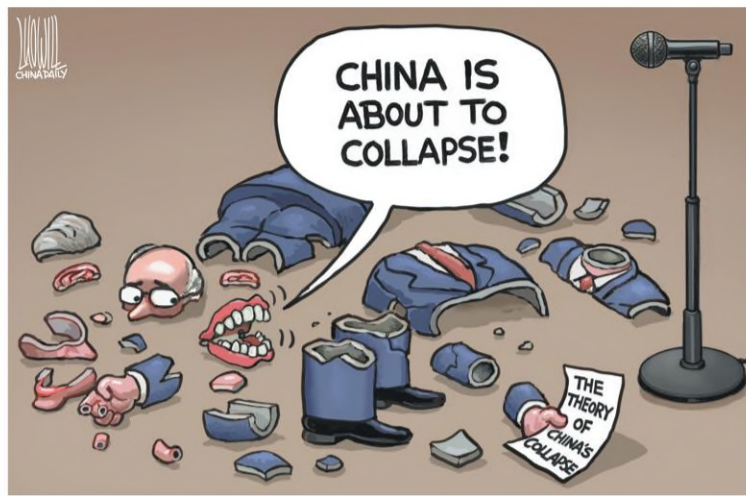
Looking ahead, the US should realize that, as Gates said in his recent interview with CNN, in a world with open-source software and everything, "China is not going to get substantially ahead of the US, and the US is not going to get substantially ahead of China." With AI technologies available to the world, and people able to build on those in their own way, fostering a cooperative approach to tech development would expand the pie for global progress.

China's Foreign Ministry has repeatedly expressed its firm opposition to the US semiconductor export restrictions, stating that these measures severely violate the market economy principles and international trade rules. Ministry spokespersons have emphasized that the US' actions represent a typical example of economic coercion that only serves to impede international scientific and technological cooperation.

The ministry has consistently called on the US to cease its unwarranted suppression of Chinese companies and to uphold the stability of the global semiconductor industry and promote its development through dialogue and cooperation, which is in the common interests of all countries.

As China continues advancing its tech ecosystem, dialogue and collaboration will prove more constructive than containment.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Private sector promotion law charts road map for economic future

China's Private Economy Promotion Law came into effect on Tuesday. It is a watershed moment in the country's economic governance framework. This is the first comprehensive legal framework dedicated to supporting and protecting private economic development, institutionalizing what were previously policy-driven measures into enduring legal guarantees.

The law's significance lies not only in its timing, coming at a crucial juncture of China's economic transformation, but also in its comprehensive approach to addressing long-standing challenges faced by private enterprises.

The legislation establishes the private economy's fundamental status within China's socialist market economy, providing long-term legal certainty to over 57 million private enterprises that constitute 92.3 percent of all registered businesses in the country. The law creates a robust legal ecosystem that addresses multiple dimensions of private sector development, from market access to innovation support and global competitiveness.

In April, while the country's overall industrial output grew by 6.1 percent year-on-year, private enterprises outperformed with 6.7 percent growth. The first quarter of 2025 saw 1.98 million new private enterprises being registered, a 71 percent increase year-on-year, with over 40 percent of these new businesses operating in cutting-edge "four new economies" sectors,

encompassing new technologies, emerging industries, innovative business models and digital formats.

The imports and exports by private enterprises went up by 6.8 percent, accounting for 56.9 percent of the total, 2.3 percentage points higher than that for the same period last year.

These figures demonstrate how the legal framework is catalyzing private sector dynamism, particularly in high-value, innovation-driven sectors that are crucial for China's economic upgrading.

The law establishes groundbreaking mechanisms to ensure fair competition, mandating equal access to key production factors, including capital, land, technology, talent and data, while prohibiting discrimination in government procurement and licensing. It introduces judicial safeguards against administrative overreach, systematically removing structural barriers to create a more transparent business environment.

The law also opens national research infrastructure to private enterprises and fosters public-private R&D collaboration, significantly lowering private firms' technological advancement costs. This aligns with China's shift to innovation-driven growth, empowering private firms in technological breakthroughs.

Crucially, the legislation tackles financing challenges by requiring financial institutions to accept diverse forms of collateral, such as accounts receivable, warehouse receipts, equity

shares and intellectual property, particularly benefiting small and medium-sized enterprises. These reforms create a robust ecosystem for private investment in high-growth sectors.

The new law is more than just a legal document, it embodies China's strategic vision for economic governance in the new development stage. The framework reduces policy uncertainty and creates conditions for private enterprises to make long-term investments and strategic decisions. This is particularly valuable as China navigates complex domestic and international economic landscapes.

The legislation's success will ultimately be measured by its ability to unlock the full potential of China's private sector, fostering innovation, productivity growth and sustainable development. Early indicators suggest the framework is already having a positive impact, but its true significance may only become apparent when the institutional changes strike deeper roots.

This legislative breakthrough comes at a pivotal moment in China's economic development trajectory. By providing a stable legal foundation for private sector growth, the law ensures that private enterprises can continue to serve as engines of job creation, innovation and economic vitality. The law is likely to be remembered as a key institutional innovation that helped shape the country's economic future.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

DPP theatrics at WHA doomed to failure

For the ninth consecutive year, the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of the World Health Organization, has rejected a proposal to include Taiwan as an observer at its annual meeting.

The outcome, announced on Monday, was predictable and unavoidable. It underscores a fundamental truth repeatedly affirmed by the international community: Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and its participation in global institutions must adhere to the one-China principle.

The proposal, pushed by the Lai Ching-te authorities in Taiwan and a handful of external supporters, seeks to politicize a technical forum meant to address global health challenges.

However, as has been the case in the past, the effort has proved futile, and rightly so.

Taiwan has no legal basis, right or reason to participate in the WHA or any United Nations-affiliated body unless granted permission to do so by the Chinese central government.

As emphasized by the Foreign Ministry, this position is rooted in international law, including UN General Assembly Resolution 2758, which recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate representative of China to the UN, and WHA Resolution 25.1, which applies the same principle to WHO membership.

The Democratic Progressive Party authorities on the island have removed the political foundation for receiving Beijing's permission for their participation by stubbornly clinging to their separatist "Taiwan independence" rhetoric. Their refusal to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus — which affirms that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China — means the political basis for Taiwan's participation in the WHA as an observer does not exist.

Despite this, the DPP and its foreign backers cynically act out the same annual charade: pushing for Taiwan's inclusion at the WHA so they can vilify Beijing for "politicizing" public health, and feign concern for the

well-being of Taiwan's residents.

Their goal is not to advance global health but to hijack the WHA's agenda, portraying the Chinese mainland as a villain while casting Taiwan as a "victim" of geopolitical bullying.

This manipulative narrative collapses under scrutiny. Taiwan's medical experts are already able to participate in WHO technical meetings and global health initiatives with the approval of the Chinese central government. In the past year alone, Beijing has given the green light to requests for 12 professionals from Taiwan to engage in WHO technical activities.

Under the International Health Regulations, Taiwan's health authorities also maintain direct communication channels with the WHO to report outbreaks and access critical information — a process that functioned effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The falsehood of an "epidemic prevention gap" peddled by the DPP was exposed as a lie when the Chinese mainland's offer to supply Taiwan with millions of vaccine doses and medical supplies during the pandemic's peak — even as the island's "foreign patrons" offered little support beyond empty rhetoric — was rejected by the DPP authorities.

The central government has consistently prioritized the health rights of Taiwan's residents. Cross-strait cooperation on disease control, vaccine development and medical exchanges have saved lives and strengthened regional health security.

The DPP's annual theatrics at the WHA will continue to fail, not because of Beijing's "pressure" but because the world refuses to reward the DPP's attempts to turn the WHA into a stage for geopolitical posturing, which betrays global health solidarity and the WHO's mission.

The international community's overwhelming rejection of Taiwan's WHA bid sends a powerful message: No amount of political maneuvering can override the one-China principle. The DPP's annual defeats at the WHA just mirror its growing isolation on the world stage.

What They Say

Mediation proves to be long-haul endeavor

Although US President Donald Trump said on Monday that Russia and Ukraine will "immediately" begin ceasefire negotiations, after he had separate telephone calls with the leaders of the two countries, the high-stakes talks between him and Russian President Vladimir Putin on the phone did not appear to yield a major breakthrough.

After the call, Putin indicated little had fundamentally changed about his demands, saying "In general, Russia's position is clear. The main thing for us is to eliminate the root causes of this crisis."

But the intensive US-led mediation efforts since Trump took office in January have not actually made any breakthrough in that regard.

The core issue of the resolution of the Ukraine crisis is whether the US can persuade Kyiv to make concessions on Ukraine's territory. But Kyiv has clearly rejected that with the strong support of major European countries.

That the Russian leader said Russia was ready to continue discussing an end to the fighting, and compromises should be found that would suit all parties is something Moscow has repeatedly said since the outbreak of the conflict more than three years ago, and should not be seen as a breakthrough.

That the Russian leader said Moscow will "propose and is ready to work with" Kyiv on a "memorandum" out-

lining the framework for "a possible future peace treaty" can be seen as the only concrete result of the talks.

Trump told reporters after the talks that he believes Putin is serious about wanting peace.

But considering Putin recently rejected an offer by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to meet in-person in Turkey as an alternative to a 30-day ceasefire urged by Ukraine and its Western allies, including Washington, it appears that the Trump administration has underestimated the difficulty of brokering a negotiated end to the conflict.

Trump appears to have also overestimated the influence of his personal rapport with Putin. Even the White House admitted that the US leader has grown "frustrated" with both leaders over the continuing Ukraine crisis.

Trump told reporters after his call with Putin the process has "got very big egos involved ... But I think something's going to happen and, if it doesn't I'll just back away and they have to keep going". "This was a European situation. It should have remained a European situation," he said.

That a clear indication that the US having got the resources deal it wanted has become halfhearted about putting in the time and effort needed to broker a resolution to the Ukraine crisis. That explains why having previously seemed ready to exclude Europe from the negotiation table, it is now preparing an it-is-your-business shift

to Europe.

That also explains the spat between the pro-Europe France and pro-US Italy with Germany as the mediator to hold the line of the European Union. The bloc also held a meeting with the United Kingdom to reaffirm the solidarity of Europe. These are all signs showing European leaders realize the US might kick the ball into their court some time soon.

The Ukraine crisis, given its complicated historical and geopolitical causes, has always been a hot potato. China advocates for and remains committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security at the global level, and believes it is important to take seriously the legitimate security concerns of all countries and eliminate the root causes of the Ukraine crisis.

It might take a long time to resolve the crisis. But China welcomes all efforts conducive to reaching a fair, lasting and binding peace agreement on the Ukraine crisis that is acceptable to all relevant parties.

As a major power having special influence on relevant parties and unique capacity to end the crisis, the US should continue its efforts to create the necessary conditions for direct talks between Moscow and Kyiv, as that is the only way to secure a ceasefire, a negotiated end of the conflict and lasting peace in Europe.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC6A 6DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 500
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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COMMENT

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A diplomat's tale of 'ironclad brotherhood'

My earliest memories of Abbottabad, a small town surrounded by beautiful hills in northwestern Pakistan, include that of a Chinese shoe shop. The shoemakers were originally from China but had settled in Abbottabad. I remember my father telling us that the shoes they made were the best. They would map our feet and use the finest leather to make shoes which lasted a lifetime or until we grew out of them.

The China Boot House, a prominent landmark in the small city, was my introduction to China and the Chinese people. To the north of the Abbottabad hills are the mighty mountain ranges, beyond which, children like us were told, was a fairland.

Little did I know then that the fairland was China. No one in our family had actually been to China. But the stories we were told about China were fascinating. They were tales of friendship, of beauty, honesty and valor, of a glorious ancient civilization that had bonded with ours. China was then, as it is now, in our hearts and our minds.

Much later, the Karakoram Highway was built connecting Abbottabad with China across the highest mountain ranges in the world, giving a concrete shape to the everlasting bond between the Pakistani and Chinese peoples. Today, Abbottabad is the gateway to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a road to a shared future of harmony, peace and prosperity.

The China Boot House is no longer there. Its place has been taken by countless Chinese businesses, not only in Abbottabad but also the rest of Pakistan.

Fast forward to 1980, when I was posted as a junior officer in the Pakistani mission at the UN Headquarters in Geneva at a time when the world was still in the grip of the Cold War. We worked and shared our world views with our Chinese friends, apart from enjoying the food at the Chinese mission at the UN.

In 2005, I was appointed Pakistan's ambassador to China — a high point in my career. Most of all my family was delighted to be in Beijing, and enjoyed every minute of their three-and-a-half-year stay there. We were enriched by the wisdom of China, and fascinated by

its culture. Of particular interest to me was, and still is, traditional Chinese medicine. In my 40 years with the Pakistani Foreign Service, China was easily my best posting.

During my posting in China, construction cranes worked day and night across Beijing to prepare for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, and I was fortunate to see, firsthand, the preparations for the Beijing 2008 Olympics. More than 100 heads of state and government attended the 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony, with our Chinese friends giving a standing ovation to the Pakistani contingent when it entered the arena during the Parade of Nations.

Pakistan and China have stood together, solid as a rock. For example, when a massive earthquake hit Pakistan in 2005, claiming innumerable lives and causing widespread destruction, a Chinese government official called the Pakistani embassy in Beijing

to say that Chinese rescue and medical teams were ready to fly to Pakistan the same evening.

I had the honor to see off the first Chinese rescue and relief team. Several wide-bodied aircraft flew twice a day for more than a month carrying relief materials from Beijing to Islamabad. When I invited the doctors and relief personnel on their return from Pakistan after two months to the embassy, they narrated moving stories of friendship.

One especially heartwarming story was that of a small Kashmiri girl who had lost her parents and other family members in the quake. On the cold winter nights, she would keep warm with the only goat she was left with. Our Chinese friends, tears flowing down their cheeks, said the little girl offered the goat to them as a gift to show her gratitude. They eventually agreed to accept as a souvenir a baked figure of the goat, reflecting the love and friendship

between the two peoples.

In 2010, when vast stretches of Pakistan were inundated by floods, Chinese rescue and relief teams immediately flew to Pakistan to help the victims. Among the Chinese teams was a young nurse called Mei. We knew her because she worked at a hospital in Beijing and had treated some members of my family.

Mei called us in Islamabad from the flooded province of Sindh to enquire whether we were well. I was then Pakistan's foreign secretary and deeply touched by her kind gesture. We are still in touch, through WeChat, with her. For us Nurse Mei, Dr Gong Li and Dr Mu of the AFP Hospital are powerful symbols of Pakistani-Chinese friendship. They are like our own family, and their kindness and humanity reflect the ethos of China.

When the devastating Wenchuan earthquake struck, I had moved to Islamabad but my wife and children were still living in Beijing. My wife reached out to Le Aimei, wife of then foreign minister Yang Jiechi, to not only console her but also say that Pakistan was ready to work with China in the rescue and relief operations.

During our stay in China, we travelled widely, enjoying Chinese culture and cuisine. From Kashgar to Dalian to Shanghai to Guangzhou and beyond to Hainan and the Macao and Hong Kong special administrative regions, we saw the achievements of China and met young Chinese artists who could sing Pakistani songs and play Pakistani musical instruments. Liang Hao sang better than many Pakistani ghazal singers, Hou Wei, a young girl, could sing songs in immaculate Urdu, and robust Punjabi. The Chinese show, *My Dream*, put together by the specially abled brought tears to our eyes.

We also visited markets in Beijing, especially the painter's quarters, to buy Chinese paintings. Our home in Islamabad is decorated with these souvenirs and mementos from China. Our granddaughter Alisha, who is only two months old, will hear the tales of China from her grandparents and her father (my son) Hamza, who studied at Peking University. And the tales of the fairland beyond the Abbottabad mountains will continue to reverberate in Pakistan.

The author is Pakistan's former foreign secretary, and former ambassador to China.

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

China still an attractive FDI destination

The flow of foreign direct investment into China has declined significantly in recent years. Balance of payments (BOP) statistics indicate that net FDI inflows plummeted from a peak of \$344 billion in 2021 to \$51.3 billion in 2023 and further to just \$18.6 billion in 2024 — the lowest in three decades.

Although this happened amid a global decline in FDI, the sharp drop has fuelled concerns about a potential exodus of foreign capital from China. However, a deeper examination of the data shows the situation is more nuanced than it appears.

In contrast to the FDI data in BOP data, utilized FDI, reported by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, paints a more robust picture. Despite declining from its 2022 peak, utilized FDI stood at \$163.3 billion in 2023 and \$116.2 billion in 2024, significantly exceeding the FDI figure in the BOP data. While BOP foreign direct investment measures net capital flows (inflows minus outflows), utilized FDI focuses on gross capital inflows but excludes reinvested earnings, retained profits and intra-company debt transactions, making it an important complementary measure of foreign investment activity.

A recent AMRO study attributes the decline in China's BOP foreign direct investment primarily to cyclical factors rather than structural ones. Tighter global liquidity conditions and higher borrowing costs abroad, spurred by the US Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes from 2022-24, have dampened foreign capital inflows into China.

Additionally, reversed and widening interest differentials have prompted foreign companies in China to repatriate profits and repay debts to parent companies abroad, further reducing net FDI flows.

Despite ongoing US-China trade tensions, which have eased after the recent trade talks between the two sides in Geneva, geopolitical tensions have had a limited impact on overall FDI flows. AMRO's research shows no significant correlation between political distance and foreign investment in China.

Recent initiatives aimed at expanding market access, reducing restrictions, and streamlining regulatory frameworks should continue.

Similarly, rising labor costs in China, often cited as a deterrent, have not diminished China's attractiveness as an FDI destination either. Foreign companies continue to be drawn to the country's vast domestic market, efficient supply chains and world-class infrastructure.

The geographical distribution of utilized FDI inflows also underscores enduring global economic integration rather than fragmentation. Asian economies, with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, acting as the primary gateway, continue to dominate China's utilized FDI inflows. European investments, particularly the Netherlands' investments, in China jumped 306.5 percent in 2022, and 19.2 percent in 2023. And utilized FDI from the United States increased 51.7 percent in 2023 despite the ongoing tensions.

Additionally, when adjusted for indirect investments routed through offshore financial centers, the actual FDI positions demonstrate even stronger linkages with key regions. The adjusted figures suggest significantly stronger linkages with Asia, Europe and North America — nearly two to three times higher than the initially reported data.

From an industry perspective, China's FDI landscape is undergoing a significant transformation. Traditional sectors such as real estate, retail, wholesale and conventional manufacturing are witnessing a reduction in utilized FDI. In contrast, high-tech industries, including advanced manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, electric vehicles and research and development, are experiencing substantial growth.

Between 2019 and 2023, utilized FDI in the high-tech industries grew at an average annual rate of 11.78 percent, now representing 37 percent of total inflows. These shifts underscore the importance of foreign investments' participation in China's transition toward an innovation-driven economy.

Although the recent decline in FDI does not represent a broad withdrawal of foreign capital from China, challenges remain. Slower economic growth, global economic uncertainties, and the ongoing geopolitical tensions could undermine investors' confidence. To mitigate these risks, China has to maintain open and regular dialogue with foreign enterprises, ensuring regulatory clarity and reliable market access.

The Chinese authorities have already taken steps to enhance the investment climate in order to boost investors' confidence. Recent initiatives aimed at expanding market access, reducing restrictions, and streamlining regulatory frameworks should continue.

Both central and local governments have implemented targeted incentives and supportive policies designed to attract foreign investment in high-tech industries, reinforcing China's strategic shift toward high-quality growth. Alongside these measures, stabilizing domestic growth is also crucial for maintaining the momentum of FDI.

Despite short-term fluctuations, China's fundamental advantages in attracting FDI remain intact. Its vast and expanding domestic market, comprehensive supply chains, strong manufacturing capability, skilled labor force, well-developed infrastructure and extensive free trade agreements continue to make it a top investment destination. Ensuring transparency, effectiveness, and consistency in policy implementation will further stabilize and attract FDI, contributing to China's long-term economic development.

Ke Ji and Yang Jiao are an economist and an associate with the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office, respectively.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Xu Jiuping

Smart cities can better tackle extreme weather

This week marks the onset of the first widespread high-temperature weather of the year in northern China. Taiyuan in Shanxi province may experience temperatures soaring up to 39 C, while Xi'an of Shaanxi province is expected to surpass 40 C in the coming days.

Extreme weather events, once seen as anomalies, are becoming increasingly routine. From scorching heat waves across Europe to devastating hurricanes and floods in North America and severe snowstorms in Asia, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe.

Extreme weather governance requires systemic endeavor spanning multiple domains, departments, and stakeholders, and effective collaboration among governments, businesses and society. To begin with, governments must strengthen institutional safeguards and establish a robust framework for cross-departmental coordination. By enacting legislation to demarcate different departments' responsibilities and rights, governments can create emergency response mechanisms that cover critical sectors such as power, transportation, and communication, while promoting cross-regional early warning and joint prevention.

For instance, in response to extreme heat waves, France's national meteorological agency established a four-tier high-temperature warning system and introduced a "national heatwave plan" to coordinate resource allocation among government departments, healthcare systems, and insurance companies.

It is important to remember that businesses play the role as engines of technological innovation. With advancements in monitoring, early warning and emergency response technologies, companies can provide precise and reliable information on extreme weather events by integrating

satellite remote sensing, smart sensors, and big data analytics.

From emergency communication devices to adaptive control systems, the intelligent transformation of critical infrastructure will significantly enhance cities' self-protection and rapid recovery capabilities in the face of extreme weather. The Netherlands' "delta programme" exemplifies this approach, where businesses, water management authorities and academic institutions collaborate to combine multi-layered protection with regional governance through smart engineering and technological solutions, mitigating the threats posed by extreme rainfall.

Moreover, the involvement of civil society is crucial for fortifying grassroots defenses. By developing community contingency plans, organizing volunteer teams and establishing joint prevention mechanisms, communities can ensure timely assistance and active participation in disaster prevention and relief efforts.

Extreme weather not only impacts economic infrastructure but also disproportionately threatens vulnerable populations. Therefore, inclusive governance must balance "material resilience" and "social equity", ensuring that no one is left behind when disasters strike.

First, spatial equity must be addressed. High-risk and vulnerable areas require targeted protection, including the planning of shelters and evacuation routes, as real-time monitoring of infrastructure using smart sensing devices can enhance reliability and sustainability. For example, during cold snaps, the German government not only opened temporary shelters providing accommodation and hot meals for people but also organized charity patrols to distribute winter supplies to the homeless.

Second, resource equity is critical. The rapidly changing impacts of extreme weather necessitate dynamic

allocation of medical supplies, food and other essentials. Establishing databases for special groups and delivering targeted early warnings and risk-avoidance guidelines are necessary to provide vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled and low-income groups with timely support during disasters. Copenhagen's "climate-resilient neighborhoods" project is a prime example in this regard.

Third, equity in rights must be ensured. Legislation and institutional frameworks should be used to establish "safety net mechanisms" for extreme weather response, define rescue priority levels and set protection standards, and regular community education and disaster drills prioritized to help vulnerable groups enhance their self-rescue and mutual aid capabilities, in order to ensure "no one is behind".

With disaster scenarios becoming increasingly complex, traditional fragmented responses are no longer adequate. To enhance the systemic and timely response to extreme weather, we must leverage technological empowerment and digital transformation to build a smart climate governance system.

At the monitoring level, integrating technologies such as satellite remote sensing, the internet of things sensors, and robotic inspections can create a multi-dimensional network covering air, ground and underground, enabling precise identification of extreme weather risks. The European Union's "Copernicus Programme" exemplifies this approach.

At the early warning level, big data and AI can significantly improve the accuracy and timeliness of forecasts by integrating historical meteorological data with real-time monitoring information. Also, smart terminals and multi-platform information dissemination will ensure early warnings reach all corners of society, including vulnerable groups,

in a timely manner.

At the response level, an integrated emergency command platform is essential for real-time dispatch and decision-making. Initiatives like the United States' "smart cities initiative" and Japan's "Society 5.0" vision emphasize the importance of digital monitoring and automated coordination of urban infrastructure.

More important, since climate change knows no borders, addressing extreme weather requires global cooperation. As an active participant and significant contributor to global climate governance, China has accumulated substantial experience in responding to extreme weather in recent years, with its "National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy" outlining the long-term goals and action plans for extreme weather response.

Leveraging the world's largest integrated land-sea-air-space meteorological observation system, China provides Fengyun satellite services to more than 130 countries and regions. Through multi-stakeholder collaboration, China has progressively refined its extreme weather response mechanism.

Today, the global approach to the climate crisis is shifting from "emission reduction-focused" to "adaptation-focused", with the increasing frequency of extreme weather underscoring the urgency of building resilience. Only through comprehensive governance that embraces multi-stakeholder collaboration, inclusive sharing and systemic integration can we transform extreme weather events from a "survival challenge" into a "governance opportunity".

The author is a distinguished professor at Sichuan University, and a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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Seventy years ago, the Bandung Conference marked a pivotal moment in the history of international relations. It was an attempt at addressing the pressing issues of colonialism, racism and the quest for self-determination.



With global politics and economics both imploding today as a consequence of unrelenting nationalism, populism and isolationism, the lessons of the Bandung Conference serve as a crucial reminder of the importance of solidarity among nations, particularly those that have historically been marginalized.

Given the global geopolitical climate, the principles of the Bandung Conference resonate with renewed urgency. When the Bandung Conference was held, it emphasized solidarity among nations that had suffered oppression in various forms including colonialism. It was a clarion call for anti-colonialism. Today, as the world witnesses the resurgence of unilateralism and neo-colonial practices, the spirit of Bandung serves as a reminder of the importance of collective action against injustice. The principles of solidarity and mutual support among nations are essential to address global challenges such as climate change, economic inequality and social injustice.

At the conference, the participating leaders agreed that peaceful coexistence was crucial. And this is clearly relevant today in an era marked by rising tensions between major powers. The lessons of Bandung underscore the importance of diplomacy and dialogue in resolving conflicts and fostering understanding among nations.

It is a *deja vu* moment where we perhaps should not only be looking at the lessons and inspiration of that conference but also to have similar engagements as these conversations remain relevant today. The rise of populism and nationalism is astounding and has been accompanied by a disregard for the

rights and dignity of marginalized communities, both domestically and internationally. The principles of Bandung challenge this trend by advocating for a world where all nations, regardless of their size or power, are treated with respect and dignity.

In the context of global governance, the need for equitable representation and participation in international institutions is more pressing than ever. The voices of developing nations must be amplified in decision-making processes that affect their futures. The principles of Bandung call for a reimagining of global governance structures to ensure that they are inclusive and reflective of the diverse realities of the world.

As the US retreats from its role as a global leader, emerging powers in the Global South are stepping up to fill the void. Countries such as China, India and Brazil are increasingly asserting their influence on the global stage, often drawing on the principles of Bandung to advocate for a multipolar world order. African countries are also weaning themselves from the West in a shift that presents both opportunities and challenges for the international community.

Emerging powers have the potential to champion the principles of Bandung, promoting cooperation and solidarity among developing nations. However, there

Guiding light

The challenge lies in ensuring that the Bandung legacy is upheld in today's world



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

is also a risk that these powers may replicate the exclusionary practices of the West, prioritizing their interests over those of smaller nations. The challenge lies in ensuring that

the legacy of Bandung is upheld, fostering a world where all nations can thrive in an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. That means all progressive nations

must have a voice in the processes to ensure inclusion.

In navigating the complexities of modern world politics, it is crucial to revitalize the spirit of the Bandung Conference. This requires a concerted effort to promote the principles of anti-colonialism, peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and equality in international relations.

There is need to strengthen multilateralism in an era marked by unilateralism and isolationism. Nations must unite to reform and revitalize international organizations, sign pacts, ensuring that they are equipped to address contemporary challenges. This includes promoting equitable representation and participation for developing nations in decision-making processes.

South-South cooperation must be strengthened. All these principles are useless if there is no solidarity among the Global South. The Global South cannot afford discord. They must sing in one voice and one tune. Fostering South-South cooperation will help build networks of support and collaboration, enabling nations to pool and share resources, knowledge and best practices. This approach can empower developing

nations to assert their sovereignty and pursue their development goals.

In a world fraught with tensions, it is critical to promote diplomacy and dialogue in resolving conflict. Nations should prioritize diplomatic efforts to address disputes and push for understanding among diverse civilizations. Interactions should be done in the confines of the principle of peaceful coexistence, with emphasis on the importance of non-interference and respect for sovereignty.

And while pushing for non-interference is crucial, peer reviews are also vital. There must be standards that are maintained. There are practices that cannot be condoned. All parties must foster and commit to social justice and equality. All parties must commit to addressing systemic inequalities within and between nations, promoting human rights, and ensuring that marginalized communities have a voice in decision-making processes. The principles of mutual respect and dignity must underpin all interactions in the international arena.

As the world grapples with the chaos fostered by the US' exclusionary policies, the principles established at Bandung are more relevant than ever. It is imperative to push for a new era of international relations with the emphasis on peaceful coexistence, equality, mutual respect and anti-colonialism.

The prevailing divisions and tensions in the world should compel leaders to use the Bandung Conference as the guiding light for an inclusive and equitable global order. Revitalizing the principles of Bandung will help nations to strive toward a future where all nations are treated with respect and dignity, fostering a world that is truly united in its diversity.

The author is managing editor of Africa News 24, Lesotho. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

ZHANG XINYU

On four-wheel drive

New golden decade beckons for burgeoning relations between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the China-CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum. Ten years ago, China and CELAC jointly announced the establishment of this cross-regional



cooperation platform in Beijing, heralding a new era in China-LAC relations as they transitioned from bilateral interaction to overall cooperation. Over the past decade, the China-CELAC Forum has been propelled by innovative mechanisms and strengthened through pragmatic cooperation. With the convening of the fourth ministerial meeting in Beijing this month, China-LAC relations will usher in a new golden decade, not only continuing to strengthen Sino-LAC overall cooperation, but also expanding the collective voice of the Global South in global governance reform.

Under the framework of the China-CELAC Forum, continuous progress has been made in their economy and trade cooperation. A decade ago, China set forth an ambitious goal of achieving a trade volume of \$500 billion and a direct investment stock of \$250 billion with Latin America within 10 years. Ten years have passed, and China-Latin America economic and trade cooperation has achieved remarkable results. In 2024, the bilateral trade volume reached \$518.5 billion, and as of the end of 2023, China's direct investment stock in Latin America had reached \$600.8 billion, positioning Latin America as the second-largest destination for China's overseas investments.

In addition, the overall cooperation between China and Latin

As the world undergoes profound changes unseen in a century, this newly elevated stage of China-Latin America overall cooperation is poised to inject significant momentum into the efforts aimed at building a community with a shared future for mankind.

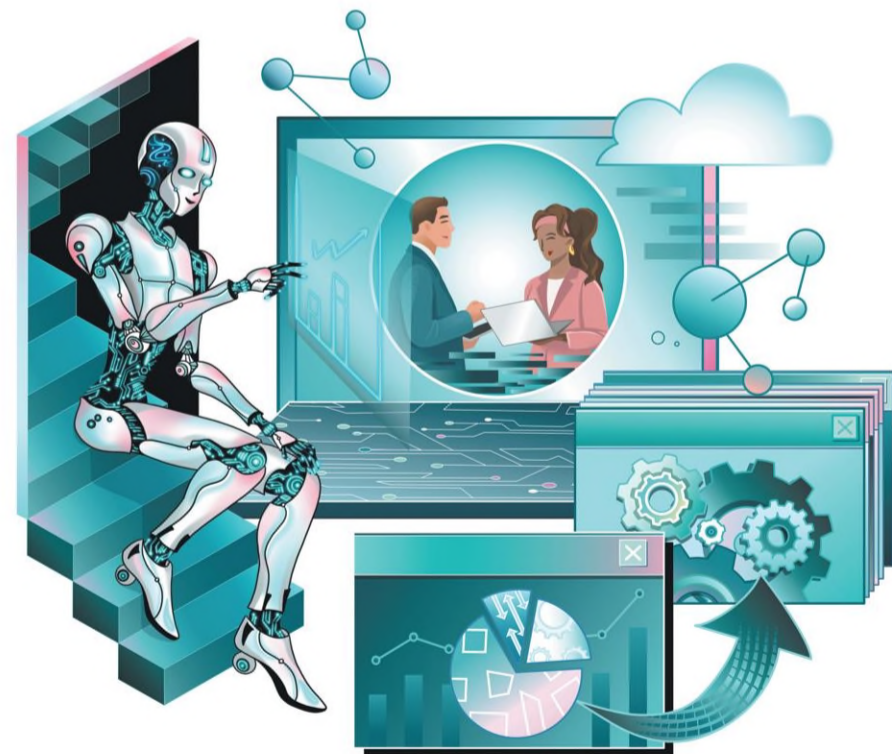
America goes contrary to the traditional North-South model, providing a new paradigm for global governance based on equal participation, technology sharing and joint rule-making. From clean energy networks to the Digital Silk Road, from anti-pandemic cooperation to debt relief, both sides are demonstrating through concrete actions that developing countries can promote the international order to evolve in a more just and inclusive direction through solidarity and collaboration.

The sustained progress of overall cooperation between China and Latin America can be attributed to the "four-wheel drive" mechanisms of the China-CELAC Forum, which encompass ministerial meetings, dialogues of foreign ministers of China and the Quartet of CELAC, meetings of national coordinators, and conferences in various profes-

sional fields. Currently, 43 sub-forums covering various specialized fields have been established and are actively operating within the framework of the China-CELAC Forum. These include areas such as agricultural production, scientific and technological innovation, poverty alleviation and prosperity, green development, disaster management, defense cooperation, think tank exchanges, and anti-corruption coordination, among others.

In the past decade, the China-CELAC Forum has experienced continuous growth in response to various challenges, including the slow pace of integration development in Latin America, the shifts in the regional political pattern, the transformations in economic cooperation models, the actions of the United States to discredit and undermine the Sino-LAC cooperation, and the reform of the global governance system. However, these challenges have created opportunities for China and Latin America to pursue innovative mechanisms, foster independent advancements, explore new areas of collaboration, and strengthen their influence in shaping global governance rules.

In the next decade, the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation will bring new impetus and opportunities to the overall cooperation between China and Latin America. At the same time, the continuously improving mechanism of the China-CELAC Forum will also serve as an important platform for achieving leading technology cooperation in areas such as artificial intelligence and new energy. China and Latin America will not only promote the digital transformation of traditional industries, but also strengthen digital infrastructure, digital governance, and digital cultural and artistic exchanges. In



ZHANG XINYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

addition, both sides will conduct digital talent training courses and explore the establishment of a dialogue mechanism for e-commerce cooperation.

Standing at a new starting point, we can anticipate that more participants, such as technological innovation-based enterprises, think tanks, social groups and young entrepreneurs, will become deeply integrated into the platform of the China-CELAC Forum. The forum will also strengthen cooperation with regional organizations such as the Latin American Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Development Bank of Latin America, with the aim of jointly building an open, inclusive and comprehensive Sino-LAC cooperation network. Furthermore, the forum will enhance collaboration and exchange with other cross-regional platforms, such as the Forum

on China-Africa Cooperation, China-ASEAN cooperation, and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, among others, thereby contributing to global peace and stability through the wisdom and strength of the Global South.

Ten years ago, the establishment of the China-CELAC Forum was met with skepticism, often dismissed as mere "political showboating" or derided as an "empty shell". However, in view of the fruitful achievements of its first decade and envisioning a grand blueprint for the second, this cross-Pacific overall cooperation mechanism has demonstrated that when the largest developing country joins hands with a region with great development potential, they can not only reshape their own developmental trajectories but also provide the world with a new model of international relations that diverges from traditional hegemony and unilateralism.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping

said in the congratulatory letter to the ninth CELAC Summit, China-Latin America relations have withstood the test of international turbulence and entered a new stage marked by equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and tangible benefits for the people. As the world undergoes profound changes unseen in a century, this newly elevated stage of China-Latin America overall cooperation is poised to inject significant momentum into the efforts aimed at building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The author is an associate professor at the Institute of International and Regional Studies and a researcher at the Center for Latin American Studies at Sun Yat-sen University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Social Media Digest

Back to earth

Amid the fast pace of urban life, many young Chinese are unexpectedly finding comfort in the countryside — through the growing popularity of rural-themed variety shows. These programs offer a window into a simpler, more grounded way of life — all without ever leaving the city.

Presented in a documentary style, the shows capture the beauty of rural landscapes, local food, and farm work with authentic storytelling that deeply resonates with viewers.

One example is *Become a Farmer*, a program that follows 10 young people as they farm 142 acres (57.5 hectares) of land over 200 days. Across various episodes, these teenagers clear drainage channels by hand in the cold winter, carry 30 tons of fertilizer on rainy nights, and even deliver lambs on their own.

Their journey offers an honest portrayal of the natural cycles of sowing, nurturing, and harvesting, helping viewers better understand the challenges of rural life. As one fan of the show put it, "When the wheat seedlings they had nurtured for 30 days were washed away by heavy rain, I cried along with them."

Beyond storytelling, the rise of rural-themed shows mirrors China's broader rural revitalization efforts, spotlighting upgraded infrastructure, tech-driven agriculture, and e-commerce livestreams that promote local produce — all while preserving cultural roots.



Many young people are finding comfort in rural-themed variety shows and the simple, grounded lifestyle they portray. vcg

One-day dream

Have you ever dreamed of running a cozy bookstore, a stylish cafe, or a charming little shop — if only for a day?

A growing trend known as the "one-day shop manager" is turning these daydreams into reality.

On Xiaohongshu (RedNote), China's popular lifestyle-sharing platform, the concept has gone viral, with over 590,000 posts and more than 100 million views.

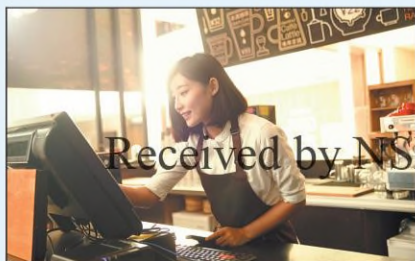
Individuals can apply through brands' official social media accounts. Those selected may receive attractive perks, such as 30 percent of the day's revenue, free merchandise, or other exclusive benefits.

But beyond the financial rewards, the trend taps into young people's desire to explore new possibilities. For many, stepping into the role of a shopkeeper for a day offers a refreshing break from routine — an opportunity to learn new skills like managing product displays, engaging with customers, and even planning creative events.

Still, the "one-day shop manager" phenomenon isn't without its critics.

"Although brands invest time, resources, and money into organizing these events, it's getting harder to convert fan enthusiasm into actual spending," said Gao Gao (pseudonym), head of operations at Mangoway, in an interview with Zhejiang Daily. "This often leads to an imbalance between the costs and the returns."

GUO JIATONG



Owning a stylish cafe is a dream many people share. vcg

Young Chinese voices resonate on world stage

Two Chinese teens move London audiences with powerful speeches blending personal stories and national history.



Jiang Xinyu (first from left) poses for a photo with local British students during the International Public Speaking Competition, held in London from May 12 to 17.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
mengwenjie@121st.cn

From May 12 to 17, more than 40 young speakers from across the world gathered in London for the International Public Speaking Competition (IPSC), the largest event of its kind.

Among the participants, aged 16 to 20, were two from the Chinese mainland: 19-year-old Jiang Xinyu from Nanjing, Jiangsu province, and 19-year-old Chen Anyi from Hefei, Anhui province.

"The power of public speaking lies in sharing what matters to you with a wider audience," said Jiang. "By stepping onto an international stage, I hope to advocate for the common bonds that unite us as humans, while also sharing China's history and culture with my peers worldwide."

Jiang's words resonated with the audience as she delivered a speech about how four generations of her family passed down their artistic dreams. Her great-grandfather supported the family by painting movie posters for a local cinema, while her grandfather won her grandmother's heart with his art. Jiang's mother, too, showed exceptional artistic talent from a young age.

However, this passion for art did not translate into careers. Jiang's great-grandfather advised his son not to become a professional artist, saying, "Don't paint your life into a corner like I did." As a result, her grandfather became a doctor, and her mother followed the same path.

"Many Chinese parents hope their children can secure a stable livelihood before chasing artistic dreams," Jiang explained. "Fortunately, I am now able to continue those dreams."

Initially, Jiang was unsure whether her personal family story — heartwarming yet subtly conflicted — would be truly understood by a global audience. "Many contestants at such events often use international examples to make their messages



Influencing the world is difficult, but at least I can share this history with more people."

Chen Anyi, 19, a student at Hefei University of Technology



more universally relatable," she explained.

But after her speech, a contestant from Estonia approached her, expressing that he had struggled to find a deeply personal story that could also connect with others — until he heard hers.

"The theme of intergenerational bonds resonates with families worldwide," Jiang said. "Seeing my message connect with peers from different countries truly made the experience worthwhile."

While Jiang focused on introspective Chinese family ties, Chen took a different approach by placing China's story in a global context.

In his speech, he honored US educator Minnie Vautrin (1886-1941), who heroically sheltered over 10,000 women and children during the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, amid the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Chen explained that during his preparation, he realized the Nanjing Massacre had not been addressed by previous IPSC contestants. "Many international audiences are unaware of this tragic chapter in history. I wanted to shed light on it," he said.

Coincidentally, Vautrin had once been the principal of Chen's elementary school, adding a personal layer to his speech.

After his speech, several contestants approached Chen, shaking his hand and expressing how deeply moved they were by his words.

"Influencing the world is difficult, but at least I can share this history with more people," Chen said.

A world of connections

Though neither Jiang nor Chen made it to the grand finale, both found something far more valuable than a ranking: a broadened perspective on the world.

"This wasn't just an English competition — it gave me a chance to see life through the eyes of young people from different cultures," said Chen.

He was particularly impressed by the Country Presentation segment, where participants shared stories about their nations.

For his presentation, Chen chose four animal-themed Chinese cultural relics: an eagle-shaped pottery *ding* (a holding vessel), a bronze rhino-shaped *zun* (a wine vessel), a tiger-shaped tally, and a dragon pillar.

To help the audience better understand these artifacts, Chen prepared magnets featuring designs of the relics as gifts for each contestant.

One of the gifts led to a meaningful connection with a girl from Mauritius.

"We bonded over extinct species —

the dodo birds from Mauritius and China's long-lost wild rhinos, with the *zun* serving as evidence that these animals once lived in China more than 2,000 years ago," Chen said, adding that he gifted her the magnet featuring the bronze rhino-shaped *zun*.

"Even though we come from different countries and speak different languages, in that moment, I found common ground between us," he said.

During the same segment, Jiang introduced a Chinese flower-and-bird painting by Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

"When traditional Chinese painting comes to mind, many young people from other countries might see it as abstract, but this painting is deeply grounded in reality," Jiang explained. "It's not only because of its depiction of nature, but because in 2016, a scholar discovered that the pheasant in the painting was a hybrid, confirming the species existed more than 900 years ago."

Jiang also shared the cultural significance of five iconic plants in China — plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and lotus. She hand-painted 20 bookmarks featuring these flowers and wrote her Chinese name, Xinyu, on the back in Chinese characters.

Jiang recalled that she initially introduced herself by her English name, as her Chinese name was difficult for English speakers to pronounce. However, after the presentation, many contestants approached her and asked, "How do you say your name in your mother tongue? What does it mean?"

"The next time we met, they all tried calling me by my Chinese name first," Jiang said. "When people from different cultures make the effort to understand you personally, they often develop a genuine interest in your background too. That's when true heart-to-heart communication starts."

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University museums inspire a new generation

From Chinese medicine to art, university museums connect students and the public through culture and creativity.

By GUO JIATONG
guojiatong@121st.cn

Lu Xinyu, a 26-year-old doctoral student in internal medicine at Beijing University of Chinese Medicine (BUCM), has long been an avid museum enthusiast.

"Whenever I visit a city, I always want to explore its museums," Lu said. So, when she discovered in 2016 that the university's museum volunteer association was recruiting, she immediately signed up to be a guide at the school's Museum of Chinese Medicine.

Although her role was to introduce knowledge to visitors, Lu found the nine-year experience rewarding in return. For her, the museum became a place not only for sharing traditional Chinese medicine with others, but also for deepening her own understanding and communication skills.

She recalled moments when guests would ask clinical questions — such as whether a baby's gender can be determined through pulse diagnosis, or whether eating KFC causes "internal heat" — a TCM concept referring to symptoms like sore throat and dry mouth.

"As a freshman at the time, I often didn't know how to respond," Lu admitted. "Those experiences motivated me to study classical TCM texts more thoroughly and to work on how I explained things. It really helped me build a stronger grasp of the subject and improve my interpretive skills."

Over the years, her approach evolved, but her passion for pro-

moting TCM culture only grew deeper.

Lu said that visitors sometimes debate the value of TCM, questioning its scientific basis. In such moments, she shared stories of illnesses that TCM had helped treat when Western medicine could not, and explained how the system is rooted in centuries of accumulated wisdom, time-tested prescriptions, and a holistic approach to health.

"I hope I can encourage more people to take an interest in learning about TCM," she said.

Established in 1990, the Museum of Chinese Medicine now houses more than 2,850 herbal specimens and around 1,000 historical artifacts. It serves as a vital educational platform, helping both students and the public engage with the richness of TCM heritage.

For Qian Tongxin, a 21-year-old Chinese pharmacy major at BUCM and fellow museum volunteer, the exhibits bring TCM to life. One item that captivated her was *Xinhui chenpi* — dried tangerine peel from Xinhui, Guangdong province.

She was fascinated to learn that the peel's traditional production methods include aging it above simmering honeypots, and that some of the museum's collection had been buried during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) to protect it from theft.

"I was shocked when I first learned its history. Even now, it still leaves a lasting impression on me," Qian said.



“Those experiences motivated me to study classical TCM texts more thoroughly and to work on how I explained things.”

Lu Xinyu, 26, a student at Beijing University of Chinese Medicine



“Collectors and enterprises even visit the museum to explore collaboration or recruitment opportunities.”

Zha Jingyi, 29, a student at Tsinghua University



Top: Tsinghua University Art Museum. Above: A volunteer at the Museum of Chinese Medicine explains medicinal herbs from different regions of China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beyond preserving artifacts, the university museum also enhances campus culture and serves as a creative platform for public engagement.

Qian is responsible for organizing annual events such as Museum Culture Week, which features activities like riddle games to deepen visitors' understanding of TCM and Chinese herbal film identification contests that challenge participants to recognize herbs shown in movies. She believes these efforts make traditional knowledge more accessible and engaging for younger audiences.

Innovative engagement

At Tsinghua University, a similar spirit thrives at the Tsinghua University Art Museum (TUAM), where the focus is on art, innovation, and the intersection of disciplines.

For Zha Jingyi, 29, a student at the Academy of Arts & Design and an intern at TUAM, the museum embodies the creativity and energy of Tsinghua students.

One of the most representative exhibitions, she said, is the annual display of final graduation projects — featuring everything from packaging and product design to mobile phones and headphones.

"It reflects our academy's tradition of focusing on practical applications in art and design," Zha explained. "Collectors and enterprises even visit the museum to explore collaboration or recruitment opportunities."

Zha also recalled a vibrant art event organized by TUAM to celebrate Tsinghua's anniversary,

blending student-led performances of music, dance, and costume design.

"At first, I was just a spectator. But as the music shifted and the dancing became more passionate, I couldn't help but join in," she said. "Even though I'm not a professional dancer, I had a great time dancing along with the rhythms."

According to Lu Xiaobo, director of TUAM, the museum plans to build a high-level collection system, advance academic research, and harness technologies like VR, AR, and AI to develop digital museums and virtual exhibitions — opening up new possibilities for artistic engagement.

"As one of China's leading comprehensive universities, Tsinghua aims to leverage its strengths in art and interdisciplinary studies to promote public art education and social engagement, shaping taste and leading cultural trends," he said.

He believes that although art is often seen as "useless", it plays an essential role in shaping values, exploring human emotions, and preserving cultural memory.

"While science uncovers the secrets of the natural world, art explores the depths of human feeling. Together, they are fundamental to human understanding and experience," Lu Xiaobo said.



Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

Deep Dive

Recently, the Ministry of Education released two key documents: Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence General Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (2025 Edition) and User Guide for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Primary and Secondary School Students (2025 Edition).

These guides aim to promote AI education in a scientific and systematic way across all levels of schooling. They mark a significant step in cultivating innovative talent with AI literacy and offer a uniquely Chinese approach to how the global education sector can respond to rapid technological change.

Redefining learning in the age of AI

In an era of rapid advancements in AI technology, the education sector is undergoing profound transformations.

Key priorities now include reshaping educational goals, innovating university education, rethinking learning content, and embracing the emerging trend of human-machine symbiosis.

Traditional education has focused on memorization and the reproduction of knowledge. However, with the widespread application of AI, mechanical and repetitive tasks are increasingly handled by technology. As a result, learning must shift toward developing abilities that cannot be replaced by algorithms. The core objectives of future



He Han

student development should emphasize cultivating the ability to ask meaningful questions, think critically, and drive innovation.

I believe AI follows a "bicycle principle". In primary and secondary education, developing subject literacy and independent thinking skills is like the main wheels of a bicycle, while AI serves as the training wheels, helping students ride more steadily.

However, the ultimate goal is to master the ability to balance. Particularly at a young age, excessive reliance on AI for answers can lead to dependency, stifling curiosity and creativity — both of which are vital to human development.

In higher education, students need to learn how to harness AI. Modular knowledge systems and dynamic learning paths can empower individuals to do so.

For instance, embodied intelli-

gence is a hot topic today. It involves integrating AI into physical entities like robots and new energy vehicles, providing the "brain" with a "body".

To contribute to this field, one must understand not only how large models are trained and how they reason, but also the mechanics of automation, robotic motion control, and relevant industrial knowledge. Interdisciplinary education can strengthen our ability to effectively use and master AI.

In university education, "scenario-driven" teaching may become increasingly common. For example, virtual simulation labs and industry-academia-research collaboration projects can transform theoretical knowledge into practical innovation skills.

Meanwhile, the role of teachers should shift from being mere transmitters of knowledge to becoming "guides", using AI's analytical capa-

bilities to dynamically adjust teaching strategies and design personalized learning experiences.

However, the essence of AI lies in its role as a tool that amplifies human abilities, with its direction firmly guided by human intent. While AI can swiftly process information, it is up to humans to construct frameworks and instill values into its operations.

Today, human-machine collaboration is a rising trend, and co-creation with AI is becoming the norm. AI acts as an "accelerator of creativity", not a replacement for humans.

People start with clear instructions, and iterative optimization. For example, in literary creation, authors determine themes, styles, and value frameworks, while AI assists in integrating information and refining expression.

Looking ahead, future learning

capabilities should focus on three key areas: first, interdisciplinary integration skills, as seen in embodied intelligence; second, human-machine collaboration skills, such as enhancing AI output through prompt engineering; and third, a strong foundation in the humanities, since disciplines like philosophy and art provide life experiences that machines cannot replicate.

Ultimately, the goals of technology and education should be aligned to ensure that humanity remains at the center amid ongoing transformations.

Written by He Han, 37, an expert in the digital economy and artificial intelligence. He is a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, CEO of Tianyu Digital Technology, and Chairman of Shanxi Data Flow Valley.

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Youth breathe life into ancient art

As Kunqu Opera undergoes a quiet revival, its youthful stewards are blending centuries-old tradition with contemporary relevance.

By CANG WEI in Nanjing and GUO JIATONG

At just 21, He Xinyue has found herself immersed in the centuries-old world of Kunqu Opera. Drawn in by its poetic lyrics, graceful choreography, and symbolic movements, like flowing water sleeves and fluttering fans, she is part of a new generation breathing fresh life into this ancient art form.

"Kunqu's elegance lies in its simplicity — the 'one table, two chairs' stage setup increases its sense of grace," she said, reflecting on her first encounter with Kunqu at school.

Now, as one of 38 fifth-generation performers at the Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theater — all born after 2000 — she is dedicated to preserving Kunqu's rich heritage while making it relevant to modern audiences.

Mastering Kunqu, however, demands years of intense discipline.

Performers typically begin training from a young age, practicing *tongzhi-gong* — a set of foundational skills such as backflips, leg stretches, and backbends. At the theater, early morning exercises to maintain their flexibility and precision became a part of daily life.

"There are no shortcuts — only relentless practice," He said, recalling the challenge of mastering a five-meter silk scarf for her role as Princess Yao Fang in *A Dream Under the Southern Bough*, a Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) masterpiece by playwright Tang Xianzu.

The young artists staged their first full-scale production last December with a condensed, 17-act contemporary interpretation of the play. The original version spans 44 acts and follows the dreamlike journey of protagonist, Chun Yufen, exploring themes of desire, disillusionment, and enlightenment.

Each young performer, it turned out, faced unique challenges in interpreting their roles.

For 22-year-old Cai Yisheng, portraying a Buddhist monk was particularly difficult.

"I lacked insight into Buddhist philosophy and the calm demeanor the role requires," he said.

With guidance from his mentors and by observing his elderly relatives, Cai gradually absorbed the tranquility essential to the character.

Similarly, 23-year-old Song Bofan emphasized the importance of going beyond physical technique. "You need to fully internalize the lyrics and understand the character's emotional layers," he said.

Before rehearsals begin, the young artists must memorize every lyric and line, then work closely with fellow performers to learn spatial



He Xinyue (left) and Song Bofan perform *A Dream Under the Southern Bough* in Nanjing, Jiangsu, from May 10 to 11.

TIAN YE / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Its messages still resonate today, reminding us to pursue our dreams while holding onto our responsibilities — to society and to our country.”

Li Jingyang, 22, a performer at the Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theater

movements, interactions, and cues. Only then do they start fine-tuning gestures to align with the singing. "This blend of singing and motion is what makes Kunqu so unique," said Song.

Adding to the challenge is Kunqu's

“There's a saying, 'To master the art, first master your character.' It's only through cultivating virtue and humility that one can truly excel in Kunqu.”

Song Bofan, 23, a performer at the Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theater

distinctive linguistic style — a mix of the Suzhou dialect and *zhongzhou-yun*, or ancient Chinese pronunciation. But for Li Jingyang, 22, the intricate language is part of the charm.

"Each lyric follows a *qupai* (a fixed

musical pattern) — like a poetic tune from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) — rich in emotion and layered with meaning," she explained. "It opens a window to classical literature and presents a vast theoretical world for us to explore."

This literary depth often carries timeless values. Li highlighted *The Peach Blossom Fan*, a 17th-century classic that, while centered on a love story, ultimately conveys themes of patriotism and loyalty to one's homeland.

"That's the kind of cultural confidence Kunqu inspires," she said. "Its messages still resonate today, reminding us to pursue our dreams while holding onto our responsibilities — to society and to our country."

For this generation of performers, Kunqu is more than just a profession — it's a way of life. "Even in everyday conversations, we find ourselves discussing characters and storylines," Li said. "It just comes naturally to us."

Song added that Kunqu also offers deep moral insight. "By immersing ourselves in the art — the scripts and the characters' backstories — we gain life lessons in ethics and human relationships," he said.

He was particularly moved by *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, which depicts the integrity and moral courage of ancient scholars.

"There's a saying, 'To master the art, first master your character.' It's only through cultivating virtue and humility that one can truly excel in Kunqu," he said.

Beyond the stage

Today, Kunqu is experiencing a revival. Cai has seen a growing interest among young people, especially as community events and workshops bring the art form closer to the public. Still, Song stressed the irreplaceable experience of watching a live performance.

"Watching it on a phone or TV just doesn't compare to seeing it live in a theater," he said. "The sense of space and immersion is completely different."

The youth edition of *A Dream Under the Southern Bough* will tour Nanjing and Yangzhou in May and July, with performances in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area planned for next year.

"This production means a lot to us," said Li. "We aim to preserve tradition while making it accessible to modern audiences." She added that the group has become close over the years. "We've grown together like siblings over the past decade," she said.

For He, who specializes in *guimen-dan* roles (young unmarried women), Kunqu brings personal fulfillment.

"Each role I play has its own emotional world and personality," she said. "I'm grateful my parents encouraged me to study Kunqu. Being on stage, under the spotlight and receiving applause, I discovered not only the beauty of Kunqu but also a deeper understanding of myself."

Guo Jun contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn



Zaheer ul Haq poses for a photo during the paving of Cangyuan Road in Shanghai on May 3. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A researcher's journey to greener roads

Throughout history, roads have played a critical role in shaping civilizations and economies by facilitating trade, cultural exchange, and territorial expansion. The ancient Silk Road, for example, connected distant empires and enabled the flow of goods, ideas, and technologies. Today, road infrastructure continues to evolve, with China at the forefront of creating innovative and sustainable solutions for modern transportation.

On May 1 this year, while most people were enjoying the Labor Day holiday, I proudly attended a special event — the launch of the paving of a 1.3-kilometer section of Cangyuan Road in Shanghai's Minhang district, right beside Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), where I work as a researcher.

What made this project unique was the material: recycled tire rubber. Traditional asphalt roads tend to crack and deteriorate over time due to aging and brittleness, which leads to high maintenance costs. In contrast, roads paved with tire rubber — using a specially formulated binder made from recycled tires — offer significantly improved durability, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness.

This project is one I've been working on since joining Professor Wang Shifeng's team after completing my PhD in 2023.

I first came to China in 2017 to pursue advanced research in polymer materials at SJTU. Before then, I thought of roads simply as materials mixed and laid down by laborers. But in our team, the focus is on developing low-carbon road technologies to make roads more sustainable and resilient.

I had the opportunity to be deeply involved in every stage of the project and received invaluable guidance from Professor Wang. For example, when I began working on degrading crumb tire rubber to create a new binder, he helped me understand the complex thermo-oxidative reactions involved in the process. His rich knowledge of rubber chemistry and years of experience with asphalt modifiers in the Chinese infrastructure context shaped my approach to both lab-scale formulation and field application.

The lab also introduced me to state-of-the-art research tools, such as the Low Temperature Impact Test for analyzing low-temperature flexibility and X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy for tracking chemical changes during devulcanization — equipment I had limited access to back home in Pakistan.

From lab to impact

My journey — from a young student in Pakistan to a growing scientist contributing to cutting-edge research in China — has been nothing short of transformative. But what made it truly meaningful was seeing our lab work applied in real-world projects across China.

In 2023, I witnessed our binder being used on roads in the Western Sichuan Plateau in Southwest China, helping prevent cracking under extreme weather conditions. In 2024, it was applied to the Yichun high-speed railway subgrade in Heilongjiang province in Northeast China, where it improved long-term stability. Most recently, it was used in paving Cangyuan Road in Shanghai, where I worked alongside my Chinese colleagues Yao Hongru, Wang Hanbing, and Wang Shanshan to monitor air emissions — specifically volatile organic compounds and odors — during the five-day construction process.

Standing at the construction site, I realized that my research was no longer confined to the lab — it was now influencing the very infrastructure people rely on every day. That moment broadened my perspective on how infrastructure development can be both technologically advanced and environmentally responsible — offering solutions that benefit both society and the planet.

The success of these rubberized roads is a testament to the dedication of Professor Wang's research team, which has spent more than 20 years advancing sustainable road materials. We hope this innovation will not only set new standards for road construction in China but also inspire infrastructure projects around the world.

I still remember a lunch conversation with Professor Wang where we discussed the future of rubber recycling. I mentioned that waste tire management remains a major challenge in Pakistan. He listened carefully and then said, "Maybe one day, you'll help bring this technology there."

It was a simple comment, but it shifted my mindset — from just doing research to thinking about how that research could cross borders and make a real impact.

Written by Zaheer ul Haq, a Pakistani scholar who has been living in China since 2017. He completed his PhD in chemistry at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. In addition to his lab work, he is a passionate badminton player and an active member of the school's badminton team.

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China vows to counter US curbs on AI chips

By WANG KEJU and MA SI

As Washington seeks to globally restrict the use of Chinese advanced computing chips, Beijing is drawing a clear legal line by saying that any entity that enforces or enables the United States' restrictions could be in violation of China's Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law.

While the US curbs might put short-term pressure on Chinese enterprises, analysts and executives believe that the restrictions will only prove to be a failure and ultimately catalyze the development of China's home-grown software and hardware ecosystems.

China condemned on Wednesday new US warnings on the use of artificial intelligence chips by Chinese tech giant Huawei, vowing it would take steps against such "typical unilateral bullying and protectionism" by the US to restrict other countries' access to advanced computing chips and artificial intelligence, according to a statement by the Ministry of Commerce.

"The US should immediately rectify its erroneous practices, comply with international economic and trade rules, and respect other nations' rights to technological development," said a spokesperson for the ministry.

The spokesperson stressed that "any organization or individual that enforces or assists in enforcing such measures will risk violating Chinese laws and regulations, including the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, and shall bear corresponding legal liabilities."

Washington unveiled fresh guidelines last week, warning companies that the use of Chinese-made advanced AI semiconductors, specifically tech giant Huawei's Ascend chips, would put them at risk of violating US export controls.

The US Commerce Department said its policy was aimed at sharing its AI technology "with trusted foreign countries around the world, while keeping the technology out of the hands of our adversaries."

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said on Wednesday that "all in all, the export control was a failure."

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Tourists visit the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province, on Tuesday. With the onset of the early summer peak tourism season, the UNESCO World Heritage site is attracting a large number of visitors eager to explore the ancient Buddhist carvings. HAO YUAN / XINHUA

Xi stresses heritage protection

Digital technology helps to preserve historical legacy at Longmen Grottoes

By MO JINGXI in Beijing and SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou

When President Xi Jinping ascended the steps to Guyang Cave, the oldest cave at the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province, on Monday afternoon, Gu Hongyao and his colleagues from the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute were documenting the site.

Gu is responsible for archaeological surveying, which requires him to document every detail within the cave, to ensure its better protection.

President Xi was very concerned about the instability of rock formations in stone cultural relics and made detailed inquiries on issues such as water infiltration, weathering and microbial damage, according to Gu and his colleagues.

"He asked us to protect, inherit and promote these treasures of Chinese culture. I believe that the reason these cliffside treasures are so precious is not only because they carry a long-standing cultural legacy, but also because they are a testament to the craftsmanship and spirit of the artisans," Gu said.

When Gu joined the institute 20 years ago, the work was time-consuming and labor-intensive because the archaeologists could only rely on their own hands, a pen and a piece of paper.

Nowadays, the work efficiency of surveying has been greatly



A staff member works on restoring a Buddha's head from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) at the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute in Luoyang, Henan province, on Tuesday. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

enhanced as 3D digital technologies can help produce the preliminary drawings. In addition, 3D printing is used to create eaves for the niches to prevent rainwater from directly eroding the statues, and ground-penetrating radar detection is used to accurately locate cracks and water seepage.

"We are trying every means to preserve the legacy of Chinese civilization for as long as possible," he said.

First built in AD 493, the Longmen Grottoes comprise more than 2,300 caves and niches carved into the steep limestone cliffs over a 1-kilometer-long stretch. Standing as a testament to the artistic and cultural zenith of ancient China, the site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000.

Ma Chaolong, who joined the

Shanxi province; and the Majijishan Grottoes in Tianshui, Gansu.

Yu said he told Xi that the stone carvings from Guyang Cave provide invaluable historical materials for the study of Buddhist architecture and carving art, as well as music, dance, clothing and cultural exchanges in ancient times.

After inspecting the overall layout and appearance of the grottoes, as well as the representative niches and statues, Xi emphasized the need to protect, inherit and promote the country's cultural treasures.

According to Yu, the preservation of cultural heritage has entered a new era, shifting from rescue-based protection to preventive protection.

It is essential now to leverage the power of technology and incorporate new materials and techniques into the preservation of cultural heritage in order to make it more precise and effective, Yu said.

China's vast landscape is home to nearly 6,000 cave temples, and Xi said that the nation's major grottoes are "treasures of Chinese civilization" with significant historical and cultural value.

Since 2012, Xi has visited multiple provincial-level regions rich in cultural heritage for inspections, issued more than 170 important directives on cultural relics, archaeology and intangible cultural heritage, and conducted on-site investigations of over 100 historical and cultural heritage sites. He has paid visits to all of China's four major grotto sites.

Contact the writers at mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

WORLD WATCH
By James Shikwati

President's remarks at forum align with Global South hopes

President Xi Jinping's address at the opening ceremony of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum on May 13 went well beyond its intended audience. It struck a chord across the Global South, which sees China as a dependable partner and whose messaging reflects their own aspirations for multilateralism, global justice and a world order not dominated by a single hegemonic power.

In a world currently fractured by geopolitical tensions, vulnerability and uncertainty occasioned by the United States' tariff moves, Xi's appeal for solidarity and a shared future carried a message of hope for unity and the reform of the global governance architecture. The call for a reformed global governance system that treats developing nations as equal stakeholders, rather than peripheral players, reflects the long-standing frustrations of Africa and Asia, besides Latin America and the Caribbean. For many in the Global South, the current global governance system is stuck in colonial biases and narratives.

The Global South's grievances are not new, and China is offering a moral and more reliable model for governance. The post-World War II order was not made with the Global South in mind, but for victorious Western powers. Xi's speech emphasized the need to focus on concrete outcomes as outlined in the example of a model for high-tech South-South cooperation in the China-CELAC satellite cooperation program. The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative is also a template for building partnerships based on infrastructure, trade and shared development goals that facilitate the possibility for a reimagined international order.

Xi's words were an invitation to build a new world order that is more equitable, inclusive and free from coercion — a world of true friendship. In his address, Xi quoted an 11th-century Chinese poet, who said, "Life's greatest joy comes from finding kindred spirits"; and he also mentioned a Latin American proverb that says, "The one who has a friend has a treasure."

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BAND OF BROTHERS BATTLES SOLITUDE, WIND AND SUN TO TRANSFORM DESERT

Dedicated rangers in remote Gansu reserve work hard to revive ecology

By ZHAO XU in Dunhuang, Gansu
zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn



Every year between October and November, the poplar forests in the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province, come alive in a blaze of vibrant, shimmering yellow. Golden shafts of sunlight pour into the cave dwelling of ranger Lu Shengrong, when the door swings open during the day.

Outside, the desert stretches end-

lessly, its sands tinged a darker shade by mineral-rich gravel — iron and manganese oxides — weathered by wind and sun over the years.

"These are the forces that have shaped both the land and the lives within it, including mine," said Lu.

For the past four years, the cave standing in the reserve's north-

western reaches has served as both his workplace and home. It was carved from a towering, wall-like landform which has been shaped by the relentless sculpting force of the desert wind.

Known as Yardang, or yadan, these striking formations are a geological hallmark of Dunhuang — an ancient oasis town and important stop along the Silk Road, which once linked China to Central Asia and beyond.

See **Dunhuang**, page 2

Deadly strike



Palestinians grieve on Tuesday after an Israeli airstrike on a school that shelters displaced people in Gaza City. At least 64 Palestinians were killed in Tuesday's attacks across Gaza. MAHMOUD ZAKI / XINHUA

PAGE TWO

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Endangered Przewalski's horses are seen in the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Migrating waterbirds use the reserve's wetlands as stopovers. SUN ZHICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Dunhuang: A triumph of desert survival, renewal



Poplar trees bring vibrancy to the desert at the Dunhuang Xihu Nature Reserve, Gansu province. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

From page 1

The opening of that great land route in the 2nd century BC sparked waves of migration and land reclamation that ebbed and flowed for two millennia. Though the desert was always present, the 18th century saw its rapid expansion. Wetlands vanished as migration and overcultivation depleted water resources, allowing the desert's creeping advance.

"What we have done to nature, we must now make right," Lu said, pointing out that Xihu, or West Lake, serves as a reminder of a time when water-rich landscapes stretched across the vast region west of Dunhuang.

"Today, within our 6,600-square-kilometer reserve, approximately 970 sq km are wetlands. This is why the reserve is considered the last natural barrier against the encroaching desert — safeguarding not only the surrounding ecosystem, but also the world-renowned Mogao Grottoes, located about 145 km to the east," he said.

Harsh realities

The reserve was founded in 1993, and Lu became a ranger there in 2011 at age 28.

He said his first task was making the "straw checkerboard." This simple yet remarkably effective Chinese method of sand stabilization involves drying wheat or rice straw and inserting it vertically into the sand to a depth of 15 centimeters, leaving 20 to 25 cm exposed. The grid consists of 1-by-1-meter squares.

The checkerboard traps sand and also captures rainfall. The decaying straw releases nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, enriching the soil and fostering plant growth.

Lu recalls waking up early every day to work on the straw checkerboards, continuing until noon when the temperature sometimes soared to 40 C.

"Back then, my workstation — the reserve has four stations in total — was located at the western edge of Er Dun village, a settlement encircled by the desolate Gobi and aptly known as 'the first village of the desert,' a name that carries an unmistakable sense of harshness," he said.

Lu said his bungalow was located in the path of the wind. "To wake up with sand in my mouth — there was simply no way to keep it out, even with the doors and windows tightly shut," he said.

"Every spring, after a winter of howling gales, sand was piled half-way up our bungalow. The trenches we'd dug for planting trees were bur-

ied, and it took half a month to clear them. Without that, water — more precious than most things here — would simply run off instead of nourishing the roots."

In 2021, Lu arrived at his current post — Tuliangdao Station — on the northwestern edge of the reserve, which directly faces the forbidding Kumtag, or Kumutage, Desert to its west.

Known for its extreme aridity, massive sand dunes, and proximity to human settlements, Kumtag Desert is a typical shifting-sand desert. Its steady encroachment is believed to have contributed to the disappearance of some major lakes and wetlands that were once part of the West Lake region.

"Nowadays, the entire nature reserve is closed off to human activity," said Lu.

One of the main responsibilities he and his four colleagues share is to monitor anyone attempting to enter the area, whether travelers venturing off the beaten path, poachers, or illegal loggers targeting Euphrates, or desert poplars.

The trees have an extraordinary ability to survive in arid climates as well as exceptional tolerance for saline-alkaline soils found in the region. The reserve contains the largest and most concentrated Euphrates poplar forest in the region.

Lu said a close eye is also being kept on endangered wildlife, most notably wild camels and Przewalski's horses, which are under Class 1 protection.

"Wild camels can be quite aggressive," said Lu, recalling the time he leaped over a tall fence to escape one hot on his heels. "But what truly frightens us are the ticks — they cause unbearable itching, often high fevers, and are nearly impossible to avoid during our field surveys."

He winces at the memory of swarms of ticks crawling over the fur of a dead camel he once had to retrieve for taxidermy.

Between June and September, about 120 wild camels migrate to the Xihu from neighboring reserves in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said Wu Xingdong, director of another research station.

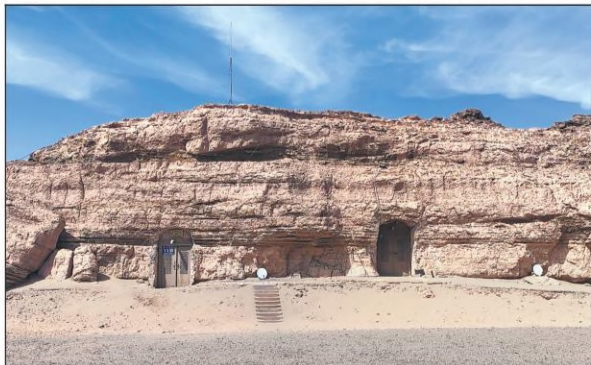
He said none of the research stations operate in isolation.

"The well-being of our reserve is both affected by and contributes to the health of other nature reserves across the broader region," Wu said.

"We've installed 32 monitoring towers and 14 automatic drinking stations across the reserve to track the 166 horses living here and ensure they have water during the dry sea-



Left: Wu Xingdong (left) and his team add water to a hydrometeorological station. Right: Lu Shengrong (middle) and his fellow workers monitor waterbirds in the reserve. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Top: A wild camel walks at the reserve. WU XINGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Above: The reserve's Tuliangdao Station is housed inside the caves carved into the rock. SUN ZHICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

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son. In winter, we also break the ice so they can drink."

Occasionally, a ranger intervenes to rescue a colt from an adult male that is attempting to eliminate a potential threat.

Several zoos and breeding programs in the West preserved a small population, and reintroduction efforts began in the 1990s in a few natural parks and reserves in Mongolia and northwestern China, among them the Xihu Reserve.

Lonesome ranger

Of the four stations, two, including Wu's, are not connected to the electricity grid, and rely on photovoltaic power generation. Stored energy, however, is not always enough and the stations sometimes experience cold temperatures during periods without sunlight.

Despite such hardships, nothing compares to the profound loneliness of life on the reserve — a desolate place where the whispering of the wind is endless. That companionship of fellow rangers is appreciated and crucial to maintaining mental equilibrium in the harsh environment.

Lu Shengrong, 42, found camaraderie in Tian Shoujun, who is 11 years his senior and began working at Tuliangdao Station in 2017. "I had been a driver before I came here. The truck for our field surveys was no problem until it got stuck in the sand. Then you had to get it out yourself," Tian said with a laugh.

"But there were new things to learn, like filling out field reports and cooking, which I never had to do before when I lived with my family. Here, we take turns cooking."

As he speaks, he confidently stretches strands of hand-pulled noodles, a local specialty. The tiny kitchen where Tian honed his culinary skills — like most indoor spaces at Tuliangdao Station — was carved directly out of the rugged Yardang formations. "We have four cave dwellings. Each one is about 45 sq m and takes around a month and a half to complete," he said.

The landforms, which were once part of the seafloor, are distinctly stratified with layers of hard and soft sedimentary rock.

"The harder layers, like sandstone and limestone, are especially tough to drill through," explained Lu.

"Builders bore at an angle from top to bottom, pour water down the shaft to soften the rock overnight, and resume drilling the next day, sometimes with the help of explosives."

Even a get dogs even his own Yardang cave — a cool, shaded burrow for escaping the relentless sun.

The caves typically have no windows, as they have no need of wind, and are lit by electric lights from morning to night. Only when the door opens does a sliver of the outside world slip in, with light flooding

the dwelling like water through a crack in a stone.

Flowing with life

Less than 100 kilometers to the west of the station lies the infamous Lop Nur, a former salt lake, where biochemist and explorer Peng Jiamu went missing in 1980 — a disappearance that cast the region into the Chinese imagination as a land of mystery, desolation, and drought.

"Not many know that Lop Nur was once part of a salt lake system, fed by the Tarim River from the west and the Shule River from the east," said Lu.

Lop Nur began to rapidly vanish in the mid-20th century, succumbing completely to desertification by the late 1970s. Yet the Tarim and Shule rivers, both lifelines for desert oasis towns and the ancient Silk Road, were not entirely lost. In recent years, significant conservation efforts have markedly improved the situation.

"Dunhuang city, including our nature reserve, lies at the lower reaches of the Shule River. For years, upstream water was so scarce it couldn't even meet farming needs, let alone flow downstream," said Lu. "But that was no longer the case after 2017."

Thanks to renewed water flow, vegetation and wildlife in the area have rebounded. Long-lost bodies of water and reed marshes are reemerging. Migrating waterbirds, now more diverse and numerous, are once again using the wetlands as vital stopovers on their long journeys.

To Lu's greatest relief, the sand dunes now halt wherever grasses take root or wetlands form. "It assures me that what we've endured hasn't been in vain," he said, admitting there were times when nature's reluctance to show signs of recovery had tested his patience.

That patience remains essential. Despite signs of improvement, conditions are still severe in a place where the annual rainfall is less than 20 millimeters.

"The wind is at its most ferocious in April and May," said Lu, who has grown used to sleeping through its unceasing howl. By day, sandstorms churn the earth and sky into a blinding white blur, as if the world has been swallowed by dust.

Contemplating the name "Devil City," a title born from the eerie whistle of wind threading through the jagged Yardang formations, Tian said: "From the reserve's edge, it feels unimaginable. But as you journey deeper, the desert begins to soften. Grassy lakes appear, and golden poplars jolt eyes long dulled by the seemingly unbreakable monotony of sand. It makes you marvel at the fierce yet quiet persistence of life."

TOP NEWS

Exchanges go on for healthy China-US ties

Interactions set to build trust, help eliminate misunderstandings, senior official says

By ZHAO JIA
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

A series of engagements between China and the United States at various levels took place in Beijing this week, underscoring the importance of constructive dialogues in fostering a stable and healthy bilateral relationship.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi met on Tuesday with Kyung-wha Kang, president of the New York City-based Asia Society, and expressed the hope that the institution will continue to act as a bridge to enhance the correct understanding of China among people in the US.

Wang said that progress has been made recently in the China-US high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs, which once again proves that equal dialogue, mutual respect and proper handling of each other's legitimate concerns serve the common interests of both China and the US.

He emphasized that China's policy toward the US remains "consistent and stable", and reaffirmed China's commitment to true multilateralism and open regionalism.

Noting that the Asia-Pacific region is where the common interests of China and the US converge as well as a focal area for their contradictions and differences, Wang said the two countries should first achieve positive interactions in the region, thereby establishing a correct way to get along with each other and finding effective channels for win-win cooperation.

Kang said the Asia Society has a deep understanding of China's millennia-old cultural heritage and is willing to continue sharing fact-based and objective views on China. The institution will work with more insightful people in the US to build platforms for dialogue to dispel misunderstandings and promote mutual understanding, she added.

Also on Tuesday, Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu held a meeting with David Perdue, the newly appointed US ambassador to China, who arrived in Beijing last week, just days after the world's two largest economies agreed to ease trade tensions.

During their talks, Ma emphasized that China approaches its relationship with the US based on the three principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, while firmly safeguarding its own sovereignty, security and development interests.

He voiced the hope that Washington will work with Beijing in the same direction to promote the steady, sound and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

Earlier this week, the initiative to host 50,000 US students for exchange programs in China over a period of five years also

“Engagement between Chinese officials at different levels with various representatives from the US demonstrates China's strong desire to achieve positive and effective interactions with all sectors of American society.”

Diao Daming, professor at Renmin University of China

made some progress.

On Monday, Liu Jianchao, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, received a student delegation from the Max Baucus Institute of the University of Montana. The group, led by former US ambassador to China Max Baucus, is in China for a four-week academic exchange program.

“Despite the challenges facing China-US relations, the friendship between our peoples has remained strong,” Liu said, emphasizing the vital role of young people in the future of bilateral ties and encouraging them to contribute actively to the relationship.

Baucus stressed that close cooperation and joint efforts are the only viable path forward, and pledged to continue contributing to the deepening of bilateral exchanges.

On Tuesday, another student delegation from the University of Pennsylvania exchanged views with an official from the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs.

“Engagement between Chinese officials at different levels with various representatives from the US demonstrates China's strong desire to achieve positive and effective interactions with all sectors of American society, especially young people, and to ensure smooth channels of communication,” said Diao Daming, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies.

The interactions are expected to help the US people have objective insights about China, in order to eliminate misunderstandings, Diao said.

“At the same time, China is signaling its expectation that the US will act in the shared interest of both nations and make meaningful adjustments to help create favorable conditions for improving bilateral relations,” he added.

Cuteness overload



Two brown bear cubs rescued from a cave are given fruit at the Tarsus Nature Park on Saturday in Mersin, Turkey. A special area will be created in the park for the bears.

MUSTAFA UNAL UYSAL / GETTY IMAGES

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Amani Altartir, wife of the Jordanian ambassador to China, takes part in an event on the occasion of International Tea Day on Wednesday, in Beijing. The wives of ambassadors from over 10 countries participated in the event. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

African countries praise nation's modernization efforts

By SONG PING and LI YINGQING

In an era where traditional development models are being increasingly questioned, the concept of modernization is being redefined across the Global South. At the 14th Meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum held on Tuesday in Kunming, Yunnan province, about 100 representatives from China and more than 50 African countries convened to explore how China's modernization experience — characterized by poverty alleviation, grassroots governance, and adaptive policy experimentation — can inspire Africa's own development pathways.

Themed “China-Africa Governance Experience Exchanges and Chinese Modernization”, the forum was hosted by the Secretariat of the Chinese Follow-up Committee of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and co-organized by the China-Africa Institute and the Secretariat of the National Top Think Tank of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

“Modernization is a complex journey, unique to each nation's historical, cultural, and socio-economic context. But beneath those differences lies a universal aspiration: to improve lives, eradicate poverty, and build resilient societies,” said Elia G. Kaiyamo, ambassador of Namibia to China.

He emphasized that China's remarkable transformation over the past four decades offers invaluable

“China stands firmly with its African brothers, supporting their modernization and capacity building for self-driven development.”

Zhao Yong, official at the Department of African Affairs, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

lessons for African countries, demonstrating that modernization is not merely about rapid economic growth but also about fostering social equity, institutional reform, and good governance.

Zhao Yong, an official at the Department of African Affairs in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the unique bond between China and Africa. “China stands firmly with its African brothers, supporting their modernization and capacity building for self-driven development,” he said. Marking the 25th anniversary of the FOCAC, he noted that the mechanism has driven leapfrog growth in China-Africa relations, closely aligning the “Chinese Dream” and its development goals with African Union's Agenda 2063.

From a geopolitical perspective, Ye Hailin, executive president of

the China-Africa Institute, said that the rise of developing countries is “an irreversible trend”. However, he noted that some Western nations still cling to the Cold War mentality and power politics, further exacerbating global deficits in peace, development, security, and governance. He added that China's development path has inspired African countries to solve local challenges with local solutions.

With years of experience living, studying, and teaching in China since 2005, Hodan Osman Abdi, Somalia's ambassador to China, shared personal reflections on the country's development. She noted that Chinese modernization should not be reduced to GDP growth or infrastructure expansion. “It is about the synchronization of material advancement with cultural confidence, social equity, and environmental protection. It is about lifting lives, not just statistics,” she said.

She noted that the partnership between China and Somalia has deep historical roots and is deeply embedded in the hearts of the Somali people. “In the memories of my generation, there is one image that is constant: hard-working Chinese engineers and workers, silently and diligently constructing roads, bridges, and hospitals.” In Somalia, the only highway connecting northern and southern Somalia was built by China, and over 80 major infrastructure projects have been carried out with Chinese support. She also highlighted hybrid rice techniques

that have brought her country closer to food security.

Phindile Mkwanaazi, deputy director-general of the National School of Government of South Africa, recognized China's pragmatic and experimental policy style. For African countries, she emphasized, the goal should be “not to copy, but to build institutions that work in our context, for our people”.

Echoing that view, Ethiopian scholar Abdetu Dribssa Beyene, executive director of the Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation in Ethiopia, called for development strategies rooted in mutual learning and local ownership. He cited China's targeted poverty alleviation — lifting over 800 million people out of extreme poverty — as a governance model worthy of close study.

Omar Mjenga, president of the Centre for International Policy in Tanzania, pointed out that China's reputation in Africa stems not from rhetoric but from results. “In the minds of many Africans, China means roads, jobs, and improved livelihoods — delivered without conditions attached,” he said.

Following the forum, participants will go on a three-day field visit in Yunnan, to get firsthand insights into China's modernization in action — from rural vitalization and ecological protection to innovation-led growth and grassroots governance.

Contact the writers at songping@chinadaily.com.cn

Chips: More robust legal framework to safeguard cooperation

From page 1

“The fundamental assumptions that led to the AI diffusion rule in the beginning, in the first place, have been proven to be fundamentally flawed,” Huang added.

Over the past year, Washington's ban on the sale of advanced AI chips to China has compelled tech companies to pivot sharply toward domestic semiconductor designers like Huawei, while also spurring Beijing to invest heavily to develop a supply chain that doesn't rely on manufacturers outside the country.

“The local companies are very, very talented and very determined, and the export control gave them the spirit, the energy and the government support to accelerate their development,” Huang said at the annual Computex event in Taipei.

Nvidia's market share in China, according to Huang, has plunged to 50 percent now from 95 percent at the start of former US president Joe Biden's administration.

Meanwhile, China's local semiconductor suppliers are expected to capture nearly 40 percent of the domestic market share by 2025, almost on a par with foreign-purchased chips, according to market research company TrendForce.

Yang Jie, a senior partner at Shanghai-based Huiye Law Firm, told China Daily that the development of the AI industry requires division of labor and cooperation. However, the recent US restrictions are undoubtedly intended to impede collaboration between Chinese companies, Yang said.

“But this situation is different from when the previous Trump administration sanctioned Huawei,” Yang added. “We now have a more robust legal framework, including the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, to safeguard lawful business cooperation.”

China could also use its unremittable entity list and export controls on rare earth elements to protect its national interests, Yang said.

Contact the writers at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Relations: Sino-LAC model applicable to intl community

From page 1

“We will uphold the multilateral trading system, ensure stable, unimpeded global industrial and supply chains, and promote an environment of openness and cooperation,” Xi said in his speech.

“China and LAC countries champion true multilateralism, uphold international fairness and justice, advance global governance reform, and promote multipolarization of the world and greater democracy in international relations,” he added.

Amid many challenges today, the Global South should increase its level of awareness about how the current global governance system works in order to find solutions. All nations, both large and small, should get an opportunity to have a seat at the table and have a voice in international decision-making for a fair stake in the outcomes.

Xi said that China and LAC countries “stand shoulder to shoulder to support each other”, “ride the tide of progress together to pursue win-win cooperation”, “unite in tough times to conquer challenges

through mutual support” and “uphold solidarity and coordination and rise to global challenges with resolve”. This relationship model is applicable to the global community in addressing the current challenges.

Xi's address summarized the aspirations of the Global South, which hopes for a world of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness, and a world that champions humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.

China's willingness to improve the status quo, together with other Global South countries, offers a breath of fresh air in the international order. Its ability to draw lessons from history to build momentum for the future is remarkable.

The author is a Kenyan economist and founder and director of the Inter-Region Economic Network, a Nairobi-based think tank. He is also the publisher of The African Executive magazine. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Bird care

Electricity workers install surveillance equipment atop an extra-high-voltage tower, which stands at a height of over 70 meters, to monitor the brooding of oriental white storks, in Huoqiu county, Anhui province, on Tuesday. In early May, a family of oriental white storks was found nesting on the tower under construction. The construction company adjusted its work schedule to avoid disturbing the storks and will resume work when the birds leave after the brooding period. ZHENG XIANLIE / FOR CHINA DAILY



GBA officials vow to further development

By ZHENG CAIXIONG and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area should further promote scientific and technological innovation to fulfill its goal of becoming a world-class bay area, senior officials and experts said during a forum that concluded in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Wednesday.

Cities and regions in the Greater Bay Area should pursue breakthroughs as a strategic fulcrum in building a new development pattern, make progress in becoming a demonstration zone for high-quality development and play a leading role in advancing Chinese modernization, said Gao Yu, director of the Counsellors' Office of the State Council, at the two-day 2025 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Forum.

Gao said the GBA has made significant progress in recent years, but now faces both new opportunities and higher demands as it moves into the next stage of development.

He pledged that his office will continue to support the GBA's development by fully leveraging the expertise of its counselors, librarians and special researchers to provide high-quality advice and contribute to the region's high-quality growth in the coming months.

Zhang Shaokang, vice-governor of Guangdong, said the province will take on its key role in constructing the GBA, viewing it as a major opportunity to deepen reform and opening-up while accelerating development.

Guangdong will continue to work with Hong Kong and Macao to improve infrastructure connectivity, align rules and mechanisms, and enhance people-to-people ties across the three regions in pursuit of building a world-class bay area, Zhang said.

Wei Houkai, director of the Rural Development Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, called for deeper integration of the GBA's development with the Belt and Road Initiative. He emphasized the GBA's role as a strategic anchor in the country's new development pattern.

"It is now the right time to build a comprehensive development community in the GBA," he said.

Although Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have different development levels, they are geographically linked and share cultural and familial ties, Wei said. Their complementary strengths in economics, technology and culture lay a solid foundation for joint development, he added.

Ji Min, deputy director of the counsellors' office at the People's Bank of China, said the central bank has introduced several innovative policies to promote financial cooperation within the GBA in recent years.

As of the end of March, cross-border yuan settlement in the GBA had reached 38.5 trillion yuan (\$5.42 trillion). Since the beginning of the year, the proportion of the yuan in total domestic and foreign currency settlements in the GBA has surpassed 70 percent, ranking first nationwide, Ji said.

More than 150 officials, counselors, experts and scholars attended the forum, which was hosted by the Counsellors' Office of the State Council and organized by the counsellors' office of Guangdong province.

The GBA consists of nine cities in Guangdong — Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan, Zhuhai, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Huizhou, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing — along with the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

Contact the writers at zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Briefly

Shenzhou crew set for first spacewalk

The Shenzhou XX mission crew members aboard China's Tian-gong space station are scheduled to carry out their first spacewalk in the coming days, the China Manned Space Agency said on Wednesday. The three orbital travelers — mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong, and crew members Colonel Chen Zhongrui and Colonel Wang Jie — have been aboard the station since their arrival on April 25. They have conducted a host of assignments, including examining and performing maintenance on instruments, installing intravehicular devices, monitoring the space station environment and testing spacewalk suits. The astronauts have also rehearsed medical emergency response efforts and engaged in scientific and technological tasks, the agency said in a news release.

Commercial rocket deploys 6 satellites

CAS Space, a Beijing-based rocket maker owned by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, launched a Kinetica 1 carrier rocket on Wednesday afternoon, successfully placing six satellites in orbit. The Kinetica 1-Y7 rocket lifted off at 12:05 pm from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert and then deployed three remote-sensing satellites — a radar satellite, a mini weather satellite and an experimental satellite — into space, the company said in a news release. These satellites will be used to gather data and images for urban construction planning, environmental monitoring, weather forecast and other civilian purposes. The "Y7" in the designation code means it was the seventh in the rocket series. The launch marked the 31st space mission in China this year.

Former tobacco exec sentenced to 16 years

Ling Chengxing, former head of China's State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, has been sentenced to 16 years in prison for accepting bribes and abusing power. The sentence was handed down on Wednesday by the intermediate people's court of Changchun in Jilin province. Ling was found to have taken advantage of his various posts between 2006 and 2023 to seek benefits for others in matters such as project contracting and business operations, while accepting bribes worth 43.11 million yuan (\$6 million) in return. Moreover, Ling had engaged in favoritism, corruption and abuse of power in the process of facilitating and reviewing matters related to investment and equity acquisition, resulting in a loss of State-owned assets amounting to over 208 million yuan, per the court verdict. Ling was also handed a 4-million yuan fine, while all his illegal gains must be recovered and turned over to the State treasury.

XINHUA-CHINA DAILY

Legal experts review draft ecological code

Symposium held in Beijing to gather intl opinion on comprehensive green laws

By LI SHANGYI
lishangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

China is moving to codify comprehensive environmental laws, a move experts say reflects the nation's commitment to environmental protection and could offer insights for global practices.

Chinese and European legal experts and scholars met in Beijing on Tuesday at the International Symposium on Environmental Code, hosted by the Chinese Society of Environmental and Resources Law, to review a draft of China's environmental and ecological code and share legislative experiences.

Lyu Zhongmei, chairperson of the society, said the symposium aimed to gather international perspectives on the draft code and provide constructive input for the codification process.

The draft code, released online by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on April 30, is open for public comment until June 13. It includes five books and 1,188 clauses. If enacted, it would be China's second formal statutory code.

Lyu noted that China is the first country to integrate both ecological and environmental elements into a single legal code and has drawn on international legislative experience, including publishing foreign environmental codes in Chinese.

Cheryl King-McDowall, chief people and operations officer of ClientEarth, commended China's progress on environmental governance.

"Numerous environmental laws have been enacted, revised and implemented in the country, supported by an increasingly robust enforcement mechanism," she said.

King-McDowall added that China's legal innovations are advanced or even pioneering globally, citing the legally binding concept of ecological civilization and the system of prosecutorial environmental public interest litigation.

"Countries around the world, particularly low- and middle-income countries, are increasingly looking to China as an important partner to position their countries for a green and low-carbon future," she said.

She suggested that European legal principles, including the polluter-pays principle, the prevention

principle and the precautionary principle, could also be advanced in China.

During the symposium, scholars from France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway shared their countries' experiences in environmental law codification, while acknowledging persistent challenges and gaps in enforcement and the continuous process of law revision.

Christoffer Lundqvist, an environmental lawyer at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, expressed anticipation for the successful codification of China's draft.

"Maybe in the future, we'll translate the code and draw inspiration from it," he said.

Wu Kaijie, an assistant professor of law at Peking University who participated in the translation of the Swedish code, also attended the symposium.

"While European practices divide the law into pollution prevention and ecological protection, China's innovative approach expands the framework to include green and low-carbon development as well," Wu said. "While drawing on international experience, we are also responding to the pressing demands of the climate change era and demonstrating China's distinctive and innovative approach to building an ecological civilization."

China, NZ renew sister city ties

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

Mayors and representatives from New Zealand and China are looking to boost cooperation and exchanges at a bilateral forum held in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, on Wednesday.

The 3rd New Zealand-China Mayoral Forum & Festival was themed "Mapping out a New Decade of Sister Cities Relationships". Co-hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Global Cities New Zealand, it drew representatives from 22 cities in both nations, including 10 from New Zealand.

Yang Wanming, president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, said the mayoral forum has been a vital platform for China-New Zealand subnational ties, yielding fruitful outcomes in trade, culture, tourism and education.

He added that his association would work with New Zealand partners to enhance bilateral friendship and practical cooperation.

Nadine Taylor, mayor of Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine region, highlighted her region's sister relationship with the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, a major wine-producing area in China.

"Our partnership with Ningxia has grown throughout the years," Taylor said.

"As we face global challenges, our regions must work together, not only in trade, but in innovation, sustainability and cultural exchange."

David Tyney, head of Marlborough-based Cirro Wines, noted the success of the winemaker exchange programs between the two regions.

"We share information about making wine in New Zealand, while the Chinese winemakers teach me about the Chinese wine market," Tyney said.

His company, which began exporting to China in 2012, has seen its sales volume in the country grow steadily. China is now one of its top three export markets, with sales increasing roughly 20 percent annually in recent years.

Tyney plans to begin producing wine in China this year under his company's New Zealand brand, while also assisting Chinese winemakers in producing their own wines in New Zealand.

Parley Reynolds, strategic development manager for kiwi fruit exporter Zespri in Chengdu, believes stronger sister-city ties will help his company better understand Chinese consumers and expand its business in China.

China is Zespri's largest and most important single country market. Last year, the company sold 150,000 metric tons of kiwi in the Chinese mainland market, a 40 percent increase year-on-year, with total sales exceeding 1.1 billion New Zealand dollars (\$654.6 million) for the first time.

Reynolds is working on a five-year project in Chengdu, monitoring the local kiwi fruit industry to determine if growers can meet Zespri standards and supply the Chinese market during New Zealand's off-season.

"The results so far are very positive, and we are excited about the potential," he said.

"We believe that it is possible to create a win-win situation for all parties involved."

Grant Smith, president of Global Cities New Zealand and mayor of Palmerston North, said the forum's main goal is reconnection.

"We've come with the intentions of renewing our friendships with Chinese cities, reconnecting and seeing where we can continue to do good work in education, trade, research and people-to-people cultural connections," Smith said.

China and New Zealand have had sister city relationships since the 1980s. To date, there are 42 pairs of sister provinces and sister cities.

Healing exchange



A man undergoes special physical therapy treatment with a Nepali singing bowl at the Ninth Silk Road International Exposition and The Investment and Trade Forum for Cooperation between East and West China that commenced in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Wednesday. MA ZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Efforts intensify to protect crops amid heatwave

TAIYUAN — A heatwave is sweeping across northern China, prompting authorities to issue high-temperature alerts and roll out measures to ensure water supply and protect food production.

The National Meteorological Center issued a yellow alert for high temperatures on Wednesday, warning that it could exceed 40 C in parts of Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan and Hubei provinces.

China has a four-tier color-coded weather warning system, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

At present, most of the winter wheat in Shanxi is in its peak grain-filling stage, a critical period during which hot, dry winds can disrupt the process and affect crop yields.

Yuncheng city, a major winter wheat production area in the province, has implemented a range of measures to combat drought and secure a stable summer grain harvest.

Technicians are deploying drones equipped with sensors to

monitor fields, assessing leaf water content and soil moisture to guide efficient irrigation.

Efforts have also been intensified in Hebei province to protect the wheat harvest. Emergency teams comprising students and teachers from China Agricultural University and local agricultural officials are guiding farmers in using light, targeted irrigation techniques to water their crops effectively.

Shaanxi has prepared emergency water supply plans tailored to the current drought and water conditions to ensure safe drinking water for residents. The province is also closely monitoring reservoir storage levels and optimizing water allocation plans.

This round of high temperatures is expected to be prolonged, intense and widespread, with the current heatwave persisting through Thursday, according to Chen Tao, chief forecaster of the NMC.

XINHUA

CHINA



Left: Deng Mingxing (back), director of the Rainbow Bay Senior Welfare Institute in Shanghai's Hongkou district, introduces artificial intelligence to a resident on Feb 26. TANG SIQI / XINHUA
Center: A community worker teaches a senior how to use smart home devices at a center in Beijing's Dongcheng district in October. LI XIN / XINHUA
Right: A merchant introduces a smart robotic convertible wheelchair-bed to seniors during a campaign promoting elderly care in Shanghai in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By XINHUA

On a crisp early spring afternoon, 89-year-old Teng Quanda held his smartphone and asked it — “Little whale, will my stocks rise again?” — causing the room to erupt with laughter.

This scene is not uncommon at Teng's nursing home in Shanghai, where over 20 silver-haired “students” regularly gather to learn how to use the popular artificial intelligence model, DeepSeek.

“They call it ‘little whale’ after the app's icon,” explained Deng Mingxing, the nursing home's director. “Once they learned how to use it, they bombarded it with loads of health-related questions. Some even joked about living to 150 with the help of AI.”

Across China, such interactions highlight seniors' growing acceptance of AI. From health consultations to stock market analysis, they are treating AI as both adviser and companion, seeking assistance in filtering scams, designing wellness plans, or simply enjoying the company of chatty “digital grandchildren”.

Smart technology is also playing an indispensable role in addressing challenges in elderly care, with more than 310 million people, or 22 percent of China's population, aged 60 and above as of last year.

China pledged in the 2025 Government Work Report that it will improve the policy mechanisms for the development of elderly care services and industries, foster the growth of industries including embodied AI, and support the extensive application of large-scale AI models.

Chongqing and Shenzhen city governments have launched funding initiatives to advance embodied AI systems, a critical move enabling robots to transition from “digital brains” to physical caregivers and household assistants.

Public data has revealed that a single caregiver is often required to attend to as many as 10 elderly residents in China's nursing homes, indicating a severe shortage of elderly care workers.

Tech giants are racing to fill the gap. In September last year, Tencent's Robotics X Lab unveiled The Five, a human-environment robot designed to advance human-machine collaboration in elderly care scenarios.

Integrated with proprietary technologies such as a hybrid quadruped-wheeled design, large-area

AI gives golden opportunities to silver-haired seniors

Adapting to new technologies has ability to embolden and empower older adults



Senior residents at Shanghai's Rainbow Bay Senior Welfare Institute learn about the use of large language models in February. TANG SIQI / XINHUA

tactile sensory skin, multi-fingered dexterous manipulators, and safe physical interaction systems, the robot has demonstrated capabilities in navigating real-world environments, transporting objects, and executing complex tasks through human-robot interaction.

“The Five's core mission is to assist with mobility,” said Zhang Zhengyou, Tencent's chief scientist and head of the Robotics X Lab. “It can safely transfer elders from beds to

wheelchairs, assist with walking to prevent falls, and help maneuver wheelchairs up ramps.”

Leveraging tactile and visual perception systems coupled with recognition, planning and control algorithms, the robot can ensure secure physical interactions.

However, several challenges remain. The human-robot interaction is not yet “natural” enough. For example, The Five cannot recognize emotions accurately, has a limited

ability to understand dialects and accents, and moves relatively slowly.

The robots also need to improve their navigation and obstacle-avoidance capabilities. Priced at hundreds of thousands of yuan, cost reduction will be essential for mass production domestically.

Meanwhile, assistive robotics are empowering seniors to reclaim their independence at home. In Chongqing, 70-year-old stroke survivor Zhang Li has regained mobility

through a wearable exoskeleton robot purchased by his daughter.

Equipped with multisensory detectors and AI-driven motion analysis, the device predicts movement intent and delivers timely power assistance to the hips and knees.

“These robotic suits are becoming vital tools for seniors and patients recovering from neurological conditions,” said Ge Chengjun, marketing director of a medical technology company in Chongqing. By enhanc-

“Bringing care robots into ordinary households remains a long journey. But coordinated planning to synchronize technological breakthroughs with market readiness can't wait.”

Zhang Yunquan, researcher at the Institute of Computing Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences

ing motor control through real-time data processing, the technology has improved users' autonomy in daily activities.

China has led in the development of international standards for assistive robots, which were released by the International Electrotechnical Commission in March. The standards set benchmarks for health monitoring, emergency response and daily task support.

Researchers have also stressed the urgency of technological breakthroughs. Zhang Yunquan, a researcher at the Institute of Computing Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, emphasized that elderly care robotics hinges on breakthroughs in core technologies requiring robust scientific support.

“Bringing care robots into ordinary households remains a long journey,” Zhang said. “But coordinated planning to synchronize technological breakthroughs with market readiness can't wait. It demands urgent action.”

AI-enabled elderly care should be deeply integrated with home-based, community and institutional care models while embracing humanistic values, thereby achieving harmony between technological innovation and compassionate caregiving, said Wu Yushao, deputy director of the Fudan Institute on Ageing.

For 72-year-old Wang Fenlan, AI has already enriched her daily life. Whether checking the weather using voice commands, practicing tai chi with smart TV guidance, or consulting “little whale” for recipes, AI is there to assist. “Smart devices aren't just for the young anymore,” she said with a smile.

High-tech solutions transforming medical services

From triage and testing to diagnostics and surgeries, China's healthcare sector is rapidly integrating artificial intelligence technology into medical practices to improve efficiency and upgrade quality.

At the 2025 China Medical Equipment Exhibition in mid-March, Longwood Valley MedTech unveiled its ROPA orthopedic smart surgical robot, a groundbreaking device packed with AI deep-learning features. Like a super-smart assistant for doctors, it helps with preoperative decision-making and planning.

The robot can be used in joint replacement and spinal surgeries with its AI system being able to create a 3D model of the human joint based on the patient's CT images, allowing doctors to simulate the surgery in advance and formulate preoperative plans. said Chen Peng, vice-president of the company.

“Manual modeling usually takes a technician a whole day, while our AI system can complete it in just one to three minutes,” Chen added.

He explained that the company's AI system has already been applied in surgical practices in many hospi-

tals across the country, significantly improving surgery efficiency, safety and accuracy.

Using AI-powered robots can cut the average surgical time by 30 percent, resulting in less anesthesia, lower intraoperative exposure risks and a lower probability of complications, Chen said.

Beijing Children's Hospital's first AI pediatrician, that joined the medical team in February, also offers a helping hand.

During a joint consultation at the hospital, 10 children from across the country, each battling complex tumors or undiagnosed conditions, received diagnoses from both the AI pediatrician and a panel of medical experts. The AI pediatrician's treatment recommendations aligned closely with the expert panels.

“I trust doctors' judgments, and I also think the opinion of the AI pediatrician can be a valuable reference,” said a father from Tianjin who brought his child for the consultation.

The medical knowledge of the AI pediatrician matches that of experts at top Chinese hospitals. In recent consultations on tough cases, its

conclusions were highly consistent with human experts, according to Wang Xiaochuan, founder and CEO of Baichuan AI, the developer of the AI pediatrician.

“With AI colleagues, we can better protect the health and lives of children,” said Ni Xin, president of Beijing Children's Hospital, where some 8,000 to 10,000 outpatient and emergency cases are handled daily.

This AI program is expected to expand to primary-level hospitals, communities and households. It will offer on-site training for local doctors and guide home-based medical care to ease the shortage of top-notch pediatric medical resources.

So far, Chinese domestic enterprises have released over 50 AI healthcare, vertical large models, according to reports from by CITIC Securities. These models can alleviate the problem of insufficient grassroots medical resources and improve the efficiency of diagnosis and treatment at a lower cost.

Triage and medical image interpretation are currently the primary scenarios among these large mod-

els. For instance, the AI-powered cognitive function analysis system used in Peking Union Medical College Hospital in Beijing is designed for the early screening of patients and high-risk groups with brain cognitive impairments caused by stroke, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

The large model RuiPath at Ruijin Hospital, affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, is applied to assist in analyzing pathology. Developed by Huawei, this model integrates multimodal data and incorporates the disease characteristics of the Chinese population, providing pathologists with accurate and efficient support.

Some 6,000 pathological slides are generated daily in Ruijin Hospital, with each doctor examining an average of 200 to 300 slides. Through traditional methods, doctors have to diagnose each slide under a microscope.

However, using RuiPath's interactive pathological diagnostics, the model can identify lesion areas, reducing the diagnosis time for a single slide to mere seconds.



A robotic arm for orthopedic surgery is displayed at the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing in September. CAO MENGYAO / XINHUA

The application of AI will effectively ease the lack of pathologists in China, improve slide examination efficiency and diagnostic accuracy, and provide more precise support for clinical treatment decisions, said Ning Guang, president of Ruijin Hospital.

However, the ultimate goal of AI technology in healthcare is not to replace doctors, said Liu Zhongjun, director of the spinal surgery institute at Peking University Third Hospital.

Instead, it should aim to relieve doctors of their repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus more on in-depth communication with patients and provide humanistic care, Liu said.

Every technological iteration should be measured by its clinical value and underpinned by patient safety. Only in this way can this AI revolution truly safeguard human health and support the future of human well-being, he said.

XINHUA

VISUAL

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BY LIVINGQING in Kunming
and CHEN MEILING

YUNNAN'S BIODIVERSITY NURTURES MIRACLES of NATURE

Province provides foundation
for biological and ecological security



Introduction:

Known as the "Kingdom of Plants" and "Kingdom of Animals", Southwest China's Yunnan province has a diverse landscape and rich biodiversity.

Despite covering only 4.1 percent of China's land area, Yunnan has more than 50 percent of the country's plant species, 70 percent of its animal and fungal species, and over 80 percent of its vegetation types.

From towering mountains to tropical rainforest, from plateau lakes to rushing rivers, from peculiar karst landscapes to vibrant red earth, nature's extraordinary craftsmanship has not only endowed Yunnan with breathtaking beauty but also nurtured miracles of life.

It is one of the most species-rich yet ecologically vulnerable regions globally, holding vital importance for biodiversity in China and the world.

First part

Yunnan's rich biodiversity is due to its unique location, complicated landscapes and diverse climate. It has almost all ecosystems on Earth except for ocean and desert.

The province has recorded 25,426 species across 11 major biological groups, including lichens, ferns, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals. Among these, 151 species of wild plants and 242 species of wildlife are under national protection, representing 41 percent and 57.1 percent of the country's protected species, respectively.

Yunnan's rich biodiversity resources provide a critical foundation for national biological and ecological security, as well as socioeconomic development. It serves as a vital source for China's bio-industry, an irreplaceable core strategic resource, a key biodiversity treasure trove and a crucial ecological security barrier in southwestern regions.

Second part:

Yunnan's agricultural industry has been booming. For example, it's one of the areas most suitable for flower plantation. Last year, the province's flower planting area reached 130,000 hectares, including 23,333 hectares dedicated to fresh cut flowers, making it the world's largest producer.

In the first quarter of this year, Yunnan exported 9,134 metric tons of fresh cut flowers, valued at 270 million yuan (\$37.5 million), up 48.2 percent year-on-year. Yunnan accounts for more than 98 percent of China's coffee plantation area and production. In recent years, both the volume and price of coffee have risen.

This harvest season, over 70 percent of the coffee has been picked, with increased yields.

The price of green coffee beans has reached 60 yuan per kilogram, while premium beans command prices as high as 80 yuan per kg, demonstrating significant growth in production and profitability.

Yunnan is also the origin of the world's tea trees and boasts the richest resources of ancient tea plants. By 2023, the province's dry tea leaf production hit 557,000 tons. The certified area for green and organic tea gardens stood at 176,467 hectares, ranking first in China.

Yunnan has developed a thriving fruit industry, featuring blueberries, grapes, citrus, apples and others. Last year, the export value of Yunnan fruits reached 5.27 billion yuan. These products are sold to 117 countries and regions. Meanwhile, the import value of fruits surged to nearly 11.89 billion yuan, hitting a record high. In the first quarter of this year, Yunnan's fruit import and export value grew by 54.3 percent.

Third part:

Yunnan is home to 26 indigenous ethnic groups. This cultural diversity is reflected not only in language but also in clothing, cuisine, festivals, music and dance. People from different ethnic groups have frequent exchanges.

The province shares deep cultural ties with neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Guided by principles such as "living in harmony with nature, respecting its power and utilizing resources wisely", Yunnan's ethnic groups have developed a rich variety of adaptive and symbiotic lifestyles.

By the end of last year, Yunnan boasted three UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites, three World Cultural Heritage Sites, eight national historical and cultural cities and 777 traditional Chinese villages.

Fourth part:

Yunnan adheres to an ecology-first, green development approach, transforming its ecological and resource advantages into industrial strengths. It vigorously promotes turning "lucid waters and lush mountains" into "gold and silver mountains", striving to forge a new green development path that harmonizes ecological beauty, industrial prosperity and public wealth.

The water quality of its nine plateau lakes has shown overall improvement. Batches of eco-friendly urban and rural areas, as well as pristine rivers and lakes, have blossomed across Yunnan. The province ranks among the nation's leaders in forest area, coverage rate and timber reserves.

Whether strolling through streets or wandering by forested lakeshores, people can feel their living environments becoming more beautiful. Green, low-carbon and civilized, healthy production and lifestyles have taken deep root.

The brand of "Living a life called Yunnan" has gained popularity, emerging as a Yunnan model for building a "Beautiful China" and illustrating the continuous enhancement of happiness through a sustainable way of life.

Contact the writers at
chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn



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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.



GREEN EFFORTS

Investment in clean energy gains momentum in Southeast Asia

Private green investment in SEA-6 jumped 43 percent to \$8 billion in 2024, led by solar and waste management. SEA-6 refers to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Most investors are drawn to solar projects in Southeast Asia, with more than 30 percent of 2024's green investments in the region in solar energy, according to the Southeast Asia's Green Economy 2025 Report, released on May 6 by Bain & Company in collaboration with GenZero, Google, Standard Chartered and Temasek.

Corporations and climate funds are leading the charge, with infrastructure fund participation rising 14-fold.

Malaysia and Singapore accounted for over 60 percent of deal activity. Foreign investment into SEA-6 tripled, especially from outside Asia-Pacific region, or APAC.

However, domestic investments in Southeast Asia declined by 40 percent — a trend that needs urgent reversal. Yet, sustained momentum requires all stakeholders — governments, investors, and businesses — to collaborate and drive practical, scalable outcomes.

Call for cooperation

While green investments may be growing, current projections show Southeast Asian nations are not on track to meet their 2030 targets, with the gaps between actual emissions and targets expected to widen by 2040 and 2050.

The report noted that Southeast Asia remains particularly vulnerable, as its emissions have yet to peak.

According to the report, Southeast Asia must pursue a systemic approach to unlock green growth that strengthens economic resilience, narrows up to 50 percent of the region's emissions gap by 2030, and potentially adds \$120 billion to regional GDP.

The report stressed the importance of deepening APAC-SEA ties,



Top: Joggers pass by a floating solar panel farm on the Bedok Reservoir in Singapore in 2023. DAVID GOLDMAN / AP Above: Workers walk across a floating solar panel farm in Binh Thuan Province, Vietnam, in 2021. NGUYEN TAN TUAN / SOLENT NEWS

\$8 billion

private green investment in 2024 in SEA-6, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

to build a thriving green economy.

Shared concerns — such as energy security, strong trade relations, and growing foreign direct investment — make the case for closer cooperation. This alignment is even more critical in today's volatile political and economic climate.

SEA and APAC are key players in the global decarbonization journey, jointly accounting for a significant share of global emissions — APAC at 50 percent, and SEA at 7.5 percent.

Both regions remain highly reliant on fossil fuels, and most countries are not on track to meet the 2030 targets. Without urgent interventions, the emissions gap could widen dramatically by 2040 and 2050, the report said.

"With only five years left to 2030,

outside the APAC region into SEA-6 green projects tripling in 2024. However, domestic investment fell by 40 percent, signaling the need for more stable internal financing mechanisms.

Carbon market development is also gaining traction. Yet, unlocking its full potential requires stronger policy frameworks, demand generation, and robust infrastructure.

"Southeast Asia's carbon markets are gaining momentum, but we can do more to unlock their full climate and economic potential," said Anshari Rahman, director of policy and analytics at GenZero.

"To deliver lasting social and economic gains, supply must also meet international benchmarks like ICVCM and CORSIA — where global demand is headed."

The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market, or ICVCM, is an independent governance body that establishes and maintains the highest standards of ethics, sustainability, and transparency for the global voluntary carbon market.

The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, or CORSIA, is a global market-based solution that airlines can use as a major step to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Additionally, AI is both a risk and a solution as for its high electricity demand and potential to transform the sector, experts said.

Data centers could add 2 percent to emissions by 2030, but with clean energy and smart AI, they can also help cut emissions. Sectors like agriculture and energy could see a 3 to 5 percent drop in emissions if countries like Vietnam invest in AI.

"With just five years to 2030, our window for action to avoid the worst effects of climate change is rapidly closing. We need to increase the momentum and focus on pragmatic solutions with near-term impact," said Franziska.

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE & VIET NAM NEWS, VIETNAM

the time for bold, pragmatic action is now," said Franziska Zimmermann, managing director of sustainability at Temasek. "SEA has a unique opportunity to lead systems-level transformation that balances climate goals with energy security and economic priorities."

The report identifies systemic barriers to green development, such as underdeveloped infrastructure, regulatory fragmentation, limited access to finance and reliance on fossil fuels.

Addressing these barriers requires coordinated actions across energy, transport, land use, and industry. According to the report, key regional opportunities lie in transforming agriculture and land use (sustainable bioeconomy), modernizing electricity grids, and expanding electric vehicle ecosystems.

Financing bottleneck

While green investment in SEA-6 increased by 43 percent year-on-year, there remains an annual green finance gap exceeding \$50 billion.

International capital inflows are growing, with foreign investment

AI-driven bots make up half of web traffic: Report

Automated bot traffic surpassed the human-generated type for the first time in a decade, constituting 51 percent of all web traffic in 2024, according to a recent report.

This shift is attributed to the rise of artificial intelligence and Large Language Models, which have made it easier to create and scale bots for malicious purposes, the report said.

The 2025 Imperva Bad Bot Report, released in late April by cybersecurity firm Imperva, drew from data collected in 2024, including the blocking of 13 trillion bad bot requests across thousands of domains and industries.

It compared bot traffic between 2023 and 2024, and found bad bots to be most prevalent in the gambling, gaming, automotive and travel sectors.

Of the total bot traffic, 37 percent were found to be malicious activities, including data scraping, payment fraud, account takeovers, theft of credentials and distributed denial-of-service, or DDoS. DDoS attackers make websites unavailable to legitimate users by flooding the sites with queries.

With the help of AI, bad bots can mimic human behavior — including mouse movements and clicks — making them difficult to detect and block, said the report.

"The surge in AI-driven bot creation has serious implications for businesses worldwide," said Tim Chang, general manager of application security at Thales, a global cybersecurity company.

The emergence of advanced AI tools — including ChatGPT, Byte-Spider Bot, ClaudeBot, Google Gemini, Perplexity AI and Cohere — has transformed the methods by which attackers execute cyber threats.

For instance, bad bots automatically crack outdated mobile applications that do not enforce mandatory updates, write codes to increase attack volumes and collect large quantities of sensitive data.

In 2024, Imperva blocked an average of 2 million AI-powered cyberattacks daily.

Such traffic typically comes in the form of social media post hijacking, where bots produce inflammatory or empathetic messages to rouse viewers to engage with the content, said Jan Sysmans, Appdome's mobile app security evangelist based in Singapore.

"The people behind these bots are trying to propagate their own agenda and create tension to spark a flame," he added.

"There isn't a standard way these bots approach (hijacking). It just encourages users to engage in the content, which influences their algorithm. Subsequently, users will get fed more of such inflammatory or empathetic con-

tent, creating an echo chamber effect."

Globally, the travel sector is the most targeted, accounting for over a quarter of all bot attacks. It is trailed by the retail, education and financial services sector, according to the Imperva study.

Notably, travel websites face an increase in simple bot attacks, possibly launched by less sophisticated criminals using AI tools.

Disrupting travel

These attacks include "seat spinning", where bots simulate the booking process of flight tickets up to the payment step, without completing the purchase. This hogs tickets and denies potential customers access to them, disrupting airline businesses and jeopardizing their reputation.

AI tools flooding travel websites with traffic may also inflate the demand and costs of tickets.

Online retailers faced threats, including scalping, credential stuffing, gift card fraud and DDoS — all year round in 2024 as opposed to just during festive seasons in 2023.

Scalping involves buying many of the same items such as limited edition goods or concert tickets at the usual price and reselling them at higher prices.

Credential stuffing involves taking over someone's online account using stolen usernames and passwords.

Financial services, telecom, healthcare and retail are the most targeted industries for bot attacks on application programming

interfaces, or APIs. These sectors depend on APIs for critical operations and sensitive transactions, making them prime targets for such sophisticated bot attacks.

APIs act like a bridge between applications, allowing them to share data. For instance, an e-commerce platform that accepts credit card payments or bank transfers is linked via APIs to the payment service firm or the bank.

Bots typically steal customer information or competitive intelligence, abuse promotional mechanisms and exploit vulnerabilities in checkout systems for fraud, according to the study.

"Businesses need to take steps to protect themselves from bots and online fraud," Imperva said, urging businesses to implement multifactor authentication measures and real-time bot detection to protect customers.

On how internet users should protect themselves from falling prey to the effects of bad bots, Sysmans said: "It is going to be very hard, with how advanced AI and technology is now. But one must always be vigilant and ask, 'Is this too good to be true?'"

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Great Indian bustard nears vanishing point in South Asia

A treacherous combination of habitat degradation, illegal hunting and predation has pushed the Great Indian bustard, one of the world's heaviest flying birds, to the brink of extinction in Pakistan and India, wildlife experts and conservation groups warn.

With an alarmingly small global population of just between 200 and 250, the bird has been classified as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN.

In Pakistan, the situation is particularly dire, with the estimated population of the long-legged bird, endemic to the subcontinent, hovering between 25 and 35, according to the World Wildlife Fund for Nature

Pakistan, or WWF-Pakistan.

India's western states of Gujarat and Rajasthan serve as primary habitats for the species, locally known as *gurano*. In Pakistan, the bustard is found deep within the arid expanse of the Cholistan desert or occasionally spotted in the grassy plains of the Thar desert.

"Agricultural and infrastructural expansion has severely damaged the natural habitats of the Great Indian bustard, particularly in India, leading to a dramatic decline in its population over recent decades," said Muhammad Jamshed Iqbal Chaudhry, senior manager for research and conservation at WWF-Pakistan.

Chaudhry highlighted additional threats, such as predation by feral

dogs and frequent electrocution from overhead power lines, as major factors contributing to the species' dwindling numbers.

Ali Usman Bukhari, an official from the Punjab Wildlife Department, said local misconceptions have further endangered the bird.

"Some locals wrongly believe that the meat of the Great Indian bustard has medicinal properties similar to those of the Houbara bustard, a migratory bird," he said.

Physically distinctive due to its horizontal stance and long bare legs, the Great Indian bustard weighs between 4 and 5 kilograms, significantly heavier than the Houbara bustard.

The Houbara bustard itself has historically been a popular hunting target among Arab royalty, who value its meat for its purported medicinal qualities. As winter descends upon Siberia, migratory birds, including Houbara, flock to Pakistan's lakes and riverbeds, seeking refuge from harsh conditions.

Conservation challenges

The Punjab Wildlife Department recently established the "Great Indian Bustard Wildlife Sanctuary" along the border areas near the Cholistan desert.

"Since the establishment of this sanctuary, poaching incidents have notably decreased over the past two years," Bukhari said. "We are now



The Great Indian bustard. SIMERPREET CHEEMA / UNSPLASH

beginning to see more frequent sightings of the bird within the protected boundaries."

Rab Nawaz, an Islamabad-based wildlife expert, emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive "species conservation action plan" to halt the bird's slide toward extinction.

Calling for more designated sanc-

tuaries, he suggested involving the local communities in conservation efforts, citing the successful recovery story of Pakistan's national animal, the *markhor*, a large wild goat whose population has rebounded from the brink of extinction to a current estimate of between 3,500 and 5,000.

"The real culprits behind illegal hunting of the Great Indian bustard are not ordinary locals but influential hunters," Nawaz said. "By actively involving local communities, who have a vested interest in protecting their environment, the government can more effectively curb illegal hunting practices."

Echoing Nawaz's sentiment, WWF-Pakistan's Chaudhry urged for "strict enforcement" of laws banning the hunting of the Great Indian bustard to ensure population growth.

DAWN, PAKISTAN

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WORLD

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Editor's note: China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.



Left: Ben Stevenson directs dancers of the National Ballet of China during a rehearsal of *Cinderella* in Beijing in 2018. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Right: Ben Stevenson; Feng Ying (right), director of the National Ballet of China; and ballet master Wang Caijun strike a pose on the Great Wall in 2018.



Japan's farm minister quits over free rice gaffe

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo and HOU JUNJIE in Beijing

Former Japanese environment minister Shinjiro Koizumi was appointed the new agriculture minister on Wednesday following the resignation of Taku Eto over his controversial remarks about rice.

Koizumi's immediate priority will be addressing public concerns over soaring rice prices, which are attributed to a poor harvest and elevated demand from a boom in tourism.

Speaking at a news conference, Koizumi said Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has instructed him to explore the release of government-held rice reserves through negotiated contracts. In response, Koizumi ordered ministry officials to cancel an auction scheduled for next week and swiftly develop concrete measures.

"The details are still being worked out, but I want this to be a clear first step toward bringing rice prices down," he said.

"I have directed officials to design a new system from scratch. If there is demand, we may consider releasing rice reserves without limit."

Koizumi, chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party's Research Commission on Fishery Policies, previously served as director of the party's agriculture and forestry division. Ishiba spoke of his "experience, insight, and passion for reform in both agriculture and the fisheries industry".

Eto submitted his resignation to Ishiba on Wednesday amid widespread criticism over comments he made at a Sunday political fundraising event — that he had never bought rice. "Frankly, my supporters give me quite a lot of rice. I have so much rice in my pantry at home that I could sell it," he said.

Economic pressure

The remarks were widely criticized for seeming insensitive amid soaring rice prices and mounting economic pressure on the public.

Data on Monday showed supermarket rice prices rising again in the week through May 11, to 4,268 yen (\$29.7) for a 5-kilogram bag. This marked an increase of 1.3 percent from the previous week and more than double the 2,108 yen recorded during the corresponding period last year.

"At a time when rice prices must come down, public trust is essential. If I have damaged that trust, then stepping down is the right thing to do for the people," Eto said.

The resignation is the first from the second Ishiba Cabinet, which was inaugurated on Nov 11.

With the House of Councillors election approaching, Eto's dismissal could deal a major blow to the administration, said Yoshihiko Noda, president of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan.

Rice prices are arguably the greatest public concern at present, Noda said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Ballet maestro's fond China memories

Ben Stevenson reflects on decades of cultural exchange, heartfelt friendships

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Ben Stevenson compared his first visit to China in 1979 to the ballet he choreographed for the National Ballet of China: just like Cinderella when she laid her eyes for the first time on the prince in the ballroom, he fell in love with China when he first saw her.

Stevenson, a Briton and recipient of the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his great contribution to ballet, has had a long career.

He began his journey as a ballet dancer with the Royal Ballet in London, and shifted to the role of artistic director at the National Ballet of Washington, DC; Chicago Ballet; Houston Ballet; and Texas Ballet Theater since 1971. He has spent more than 50 years in the United States ballet world.

His connection with China started when the two countries established diplomatic relations. He was the artistic director at the Houston Ballet.

Turning 90 years old soon, Stevenson is not good with dates and numbers any more. He cannot remember exactly how many times he has visited China other than that he did "many times".

But he remembers, with fondness and tenderness, details of his many trips to China, such as the automatic curtain in a Beijing theater and a KFC fried chicken picnic on the Great Wall.

He remembers speaking to a monk in a monastery outside Beijing. The monk was 97 years old and was educated in Oxford many decades ago. He remembers he had a good laugh when crashing into a bus riding a brakeless bike in Beijing. He remembers a delicious lunch where the restaurant cooked fish he fished up.

Speaking to China Daily in Houston when he came from Fort Worth, Texas, to attend the opening of his *The Sleeping Beauty* by Houston Ballet, Stevenson walked down the memory lane.

The first trip to China was through Europe and took a couple of stops before landing in Beijing.

"We landed in a field in Beijing and they threw our bags out on the grass. We had to carry them into a hut. Now the Beijing airport is the most glamorous in the world," Stevenson said.

"But it was the best time because the simple things were the best and just amazing. It was in a way my most favorite time of going there, those first years at the beginning."

During that trip, Stevenson visited the Beijing Dance Academy and the National Ballet of China (then the Central Ballet Troupe). He made friends with legendary dancer Dai Ailian and then academy principal Chen Jinqing, and throughout the years, many others.

Stevenson gave a few lessons at the Beijing Dance Academy during his first visit. He went back to teach many times after that. He was deeply

impressed and touched by students' technical caliber and their passion to learn the new techniques and ideas that he offered. In the end, he proposed to invite two students to Houston Ballet for a summer of training, thus beginning the first ballet dancer exchanges between the United States and China.

One of the students, Li Cunxin, became the first Chinese principal dancer at Houston Ballet. Later, Li Anlin, once with the National Ballet of China, was invited by Stevenson to join Houston Ballet in 1989 to be another principal dancer.

Li Anlin has worked with Stevenson for more than 30 years. When Stevenson left Houston Ballet to become the artistic director of Texas Ballet Theater in 2003, he invited Li to come with him and be the master of the troupe.

Stevenson misses his teaching time in Beijing. "When I was at the Beijing Dance Academy, at the end of two or three weeks of teaching, all the students in the class would have a little party," he said. "If someone came from some village, they'd play a little drum or someone else would sing a song. That was fabulous."

When it was Stevenson's turn, he sang a Chinese children's song, *I Love Beijing Tian'anmen*, that he learned from Li Cunxin. "When I sang this song, they thought it was hysterical," Stevenson said.

Modern dance

Stevenson helped China develop its modern dance. "In the beginning, the Ministry of Culture said, what do you think we need now in dance, and I said choreography," Stevenson recalled.

"I said, you have to learn something about modern dance. They all laughed. The interpreter explained to me that to them, the word modern sounded like *maodan* in Chinese — cat egg. That was a good laugh."

Stevenson began teaching choreography by asking each student to find a little piece of music and do something of their own.

"The first boy had a little piece of music and he came out with a sword and clocked a hero. The second guy came out with a sword and clocked it. Everyone was like a hero," he said.

"In the end, I got one boy and I tied ... his hand and his arm to the bar and he's lying on the floor. I said, now choreograph something. So he went and I said, now you're using your imagination."

In 1985, Stevenson worked with the academy to design and develop China's first Department of Choreography. Many students from the program became China's first generation of influential modern dance choreographers.

"All those boys in that class would become so successful in different ways," Stevenson said. "One of them choreographed dance for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics."

Stevenson also had extensive collaboration with the National Ballet of China. He staged his works *L* and *Three Preludes* with the company in 1980.

In 1982, working with a famed Chinese costume designer, composer and conductor, he created and staged a piece called *Zheng Banqiao*, namesake of an 18th-century artist said to have been most

renowned for his skills at painting bamboo. The program won critical claim when it was premiered in Houston.

In 1995, Stevenson brought Houston Ballet to China for a two-week tour of his *Romeo and Juliet*. More than 5 million Chinese watched the ballet through live TV broadcast.

In 2002, Stevenson worked with the National Ballet of China and created a new piece, *Fountain of Tears*, based on Russian music and a poem by Russian poet Pushkin. "It worked quite well in China. People really liked it," Stevenson said.

Nation's award

The last time Stevenson visited China was in 2018 when he collaborated with the National Ballet of China to stage *Cinderella* that he choreographed.

At the opening night, Stevenson was surprised by an award presentation: he was named one of the 40 "Most Influential Foreign Experts" for the 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up, a prestigious honor bestowed by the country.

Stevenson misses China and wishes that he could spend some time there once more.

"I still have a lot of friends there, and some of them are as old as I am, 90 or something."

"I was invited last year to go back to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Beijing Dance Academy, but I could not get on a plane, it was just too much for me. I am so upset that I can't go back to China and see them. My heart was there but my body wasn't."

'Red alert': Fires drive tropical forest loss to record high

PARIS — Eighteen soccer pitches every minute of every hour of every day — that is the alarming extent of tropical rainforests destroyed last year, in large measure because of fires fueled by climate change, researchers reported on Wednesday.

Tally it all up and the world lost 67,000 square kilometers of precious primary tropical forest, an area double the size of Belgium, last year.

The loss was 80 percent higher than in 2023, according to the Global Forest Watch think tank.

"This level of forest destruction is completely unprecedented in more than 20 years of data," Global Forest Watch co-director Elizabeth Goldman said in a briefing. "This is a global red alert."

Fires are responsible for nearly half of these losses, surpassing for the first time agriculture as the main driver of destruction.

Loss of tree cover last year — from

deforestation and fires, deliberate or accidental — generated more than 3 billion metric tons of CO2 pollution, exceeding India's emissions from fossil fuel use over the same period.

Tropical forests, which harbor the highest concentrations of biodiversity, are the most threatened of any forest biomes on the planet.

They are also sponges for CO2, helping to prevent global temperatures from rising even faster than they have.

Forest fires are both a cause and effect of climate change, injecting billions of tons of CO2 in the atmosphere that in turn accelerate warming and the conditions leading to more destructive fires.

The exceptional fires last year were fueled by "extreme conditions" that made them more intense and difficult to control, the authors said.

Climate change driven by the massive burning of fossil fuels and boosted by natural El Nino weather phenomenon made 2024 the hottest year on record, with temperatures averaging more than 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels.

Historically, most fires in tropical forests are set to clear land for agriculture and livestock, especially the "big four" commodities: palm oil, soy, beef and timber.

Brazil saw 2.8 million hectares of primary forest destroyed last year, two-thirds to fires typically started to make way for soybean and cattle.

Measurable progress
In 2023, Brazil made measurable progress in reducing forest loss during President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's first year after returning to office.

"But this progress is threatened by the expansion of agriculture,"

said Sarah Carter, a researcher at the World Resources Institute in Washington.

The Brazilian Amazon was most affected, with destruction at its highest level since 2016.

Forest protection is high on the agenda of the COP30 United Nations climate conference that Brazil will host in November in the tropical city of Belem.

Neighboring Bolivia's forest loss — 1.5 million hectares — rose by 200 percent last year, with a record 3.6 percent of primary forests destroyed in a single year, mostly because of fires set to clear land for industrial-scale farms, according to the report.

The picture is mixed elsewhere, with improvements in Indonesia and Malaysia but a sharp deterioration in the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While policies have resulted in a



An aerial view of the Amazon rainforest deforested by raging fires in Labrea, Amazonas State, Brazil, on Aug 20. EVARISTO SA / AFP

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slowdown of the extent of forests lost to palm oil plantations, notably in Asia, the destructive footprint of other commodities has expanded, including avocados, coffee and cocoa.

"We shouldn't assume that the drivers are always going to be the

same," said Rod Taylor, director of the World Resources Institute's forests program.

"One new driver we are seeing, for example, is linked to mining and critical minerals."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

WHO adopts historic pact on pandemic

China's role lauded for helping boost global capacity for prevention, response

By ZHENG WANYIN in Geneva
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

China has actively participated in the negotiations of a global pandemic agreement and has advocated multilateralism, unity, and cooperation among nations, said an official from China's delegation to the 78th World Health Assembly.

The WHO Pandemic Agreement, after three years of intensive negotiation among WHO member states, was formally adopted on Tuesday in Geneva at the plenary session of the assembly.

Hu Guang, who is in charge of health emergency response at China's National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, and who was deeply involved in the drafting and negotiations of the agreement, told China Daily on Tuesday: "Guided by the vision of building a global community of health for all proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, China has practiced true multilateralism and has advocated for strengthening solidarity and cooperation among nations during the talks."

"It has supported the WHO in playing a central coordination role in order to jointly improve the global health governance system and boost worldwide capacities for prevention, precaution and response."

On issues such as pandemic prevention and surveillance, China has maintained a scientific approach, put forward reasonable amendments to the text, and played an active role in drafting relevant provisions, he said.

He noted that, thanks to China's efforts, parties agreed to focus the scope of surveillance on newly emerging and reemerging infectious diseases with pandemic potential, as well as clarify the scope of institutions for information sharing.

"In addition, together with Brazil, Indonesia, Bangladesh and other countries, within the framework of 'Friends of Fairness', China actively responds to the reasonable demands of developing countries for fair access to health products, demonstrating its role as a responsible major country," he added.



The 78th World Health Assembly is being held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday. DU ZHEYU / XINHUA

Briefly

CHINA Wang Yi to chair Pacific Islands FMs' meeting

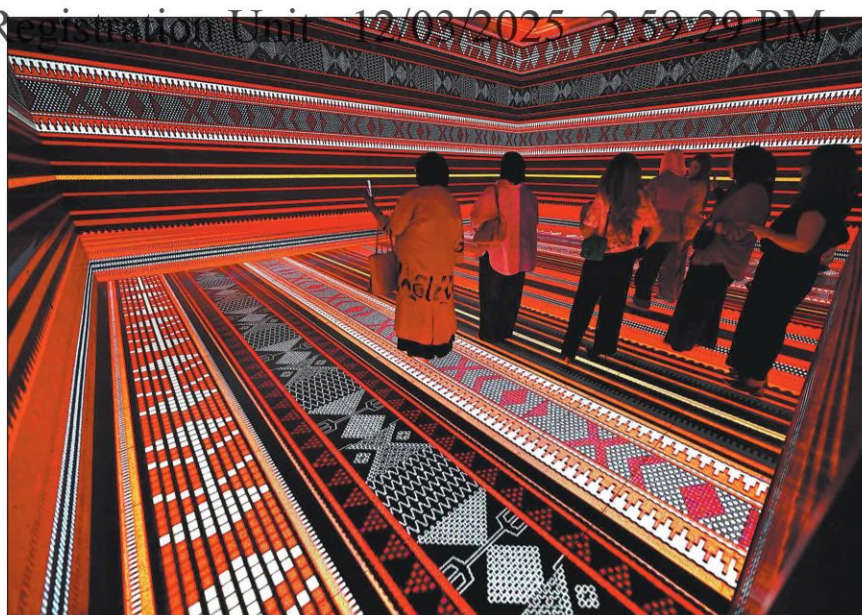
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will chair the third China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Xiamen, Fujian province, from May 28 to 29, the first of its kind to be held offline in China. Foreign ministers or representatives from 11 island countries having diplomatic relations with China, and Deputy Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Feala Nevasi will attend the meeting. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Wednesday. China highly values its ties with the Pacific Island countries and is ready to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, seek common development to build an even closer China-Pacific Island

countries community with a shared future, she added.

RUSSIA Putin visits Kursk for 1st time after Ukraine ouster

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the western Kursk region for the first time since Russian forces ejected Ukrainian troops from the area. The Kremlin said that during the visit on Tuesday, Putin met volunteer organizations in the region and visited the Kursk-1 nuclear power plant. State television showed Putin meeting volunteers and local officials in the region. Russia said in late April that it had ejected Ukrainian troops from the Kursk region.

CHINA DAILY — AGENCIES



Weaving magic

People visit a Sadu 3D light artwork display at the Sadu House in Kuwait City, the capital of Kuwait, on Tuesday, during an event to celebrate the announcement of Kuwait City as a global hub for Al Sadu weaving. Al Sadu, a form of wool weaving practiced in Kuwait and across the Arabian Peninsula, epitomizes cultural tradition and artistic skill.

YASSER AL-ZAYYAT / AFP

Tariffs make 'American Dream' unreachable for most

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

When Walmart announced that it will have to raise prices due to tariffs imposed by his administration, US President Donald Trump lashed out at the giant retailer and said the company should just "EAT THE TARIFFS" and "not charge valued customers ANYTHING."

"I'll be watching and so will your customers!!!" Trump posted on social media over the weekend, saying that "Walmart should stop trying to blame Tariffs as the reason for raising prices throughout the chain."

In response, a Walmart spokesperson said: "We have always worked to keep our prices as low as possible, and we won't stop. We'll keep prices as low as we can for as long as we can, given the reality of small retail margins."

Walmart won't be the only business to raise prices to offset the extra cost from tariffs, and the "American Dream" will be further out of reach for the majority of people as a result, according to studies.

An analysis by the Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity, which tracks the Minimal Quality of Life Index, or MQL,

found that for the bottom 60 percent of US households, a "minimal quality of life" is out of reach.

The study analyzed not only basic necessities like housing, food and healthcare but also education, transportation, technology, leisure and more.

"By tracking costs associated with this 'basket of American Dream essentials', the MQL provides a more holistic view of what it means for individuals to have a minimal quality of life in America," the study said.

Doubling cost

The study found that between 2001 and 2023, the cost of affording a basic level of economic security doubled — housing costs soared 130 percent, healthcare 178 percent and savings required to attend an in-state, public university 122 percent. However, median earnings declined for this group by 4 percent after adjusting for MQL.

The study said in 2023, the bottom 60 percent of households earned just 22.1 percent of all disposable income, but needed 39 percent to meet MQL. On average, these households earn \$38,000 per year, a shortfall of more than \$29,000 to meet the MQL.

These households now face ris-

ing costs of living as a result of the new tariffs. Goods such as clothing and textiles will see the highest price jumps, according to an analysis by The Budget Lab at Yale. The study was based on the effective tax rates as of May 12, when the US and China reached a deal to lower the 145 percent tax hike on Chinese goods to 30 percent.

In the short run, consumers will see prices increase 15 percent for leather products (shoes and handbags), 14 percent for apparel and 11 percent for textiles (beddings and towels).

In the long run, after global supply shifts, leather prices will remain 19 percent higher, while apparel will stay 16 percent and textiles 14 percent higher, according to the analysis.

Food prices will rise 2.3 percent in the short run and stay 2.3 percent higher in the long run. Fresh produce will initially be 3 percent more expensive, while stabilizing at 2.9 percent higher.

Meanwhile, prices of motor vehicles will rise 9.3 percent in the short run and will stay 6.2 percent higher (an additional \$3,000 per car on average) in the long run.

The analysis said tariffs burden households at the bottom of the income ladder more than those at

the top as a percentage of income.

"Traditional headline economic indicators like GDP and unemployment tell us the economy is thriving, but they don't reflect the lived reality of most Americans," Gene Ludwig, chairman of Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity, said in a statement.

"Americans are working harder than ever, fueling our economic growth, but the benefits of that hard work are not being distributed in a way that supports upward mobility for too many middle- and low-income Americans."

The tariff policy is not just causing price increases for US consumers, but it is also projected to reduce the country's GDP and increase the rate of unemployment, according to an analysis by The Budget Lab at Yale, based on the effective tax rates.

According to the analysis, the effective tariff rates will result in extra expenses of \$2,823 per household, and the 2025 GDP output will be reduced by 0.65 percent with a long-term reduction of 0.3 percent per year.

By the end of the year, unemployment is projected to rise by 0.35 percent — meaning 456,000 more people will go without a paycheck compared to a year ago.

New York City expecting a drop in foreign tourists

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

New York City cut its forecast for the number of international tourists by 17 percent this year as travel experts say many are expressing concerns over traveling to the US amid strengthened border policies, heightened 'America First' rhetoric and geopolitics.

New York City Tourism and Conventions, the city's tourism agency, lowered the number of foreign visitors it expects this year to around 12.1 million from an estimated 14.6 million projected in December. Altogether, there will be 64.1 million tourists, both domestic and foreign, a drop of 3.5 million from the prior estimate.

It's not just New York seeing tourists change their minds.

"My husband and I said 'no, we do not want to go anymore,'" Karen Hyf from Toronto, Canada, told CTV News after canceling their vacation to Florida over trade frictions between the two countries. Hyf and her husband have been vacationing in the Sunshine State of Florida for decades.

Last year, Canada ranked as the biggest source of foreign visitors to the US, attracting over 20.4 million visits, generating \$20.5 billion in spending and supporting 140,000 jobs in the US. Tourism in New York City is heavily reliant on Canadians.

But after the Trump administration imposed tariffs on its North American neighbor, there was a drop of 35 percent in the number of Canadians flying across the border in April to the US when compared with the year before. A 20 percent decrease in air travel also occurred last month.

Six in 10 Canadian adults surveyed by Longwoods International said they would likely stay away from the US this year due to the

current administration. And more than a third have canceled planned vacations this year over political tensions with the US, Forbes reports. At least 40 percent will travel domestically instead.

The challenges occurring in the US travel industry come after the dire impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. That era led to a significant drop in flights and fewer stays at hotels.

Additionally, several countries in Europe and Asia have updated their country's travel advisories or issued guidance to citizens traveling to the US. Many tourists in the UK have expressed concern over visiting the US.

Tourism Economics, an industry monitoring group, also revised its travel forecasts for all visitors to the US in February from a predicted growth of 9 percent this year to a downward trend of 5.1 percent. If this is followed by a decline in demand for hotels by 0.8 percent, it could cause an \$18 billion drop in spending in 2025, it said.

Negative sentiment

Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, believes that some of the negative sentiment among international travelers was because of "geopolitical friction," he told The New York Times.

The US Travel Association also estimates that inbound international visitor numbers will not reach 2019 levels until the last quarter of 2025 and spending by international visitors will not pick back up to pre-pandemic levels until 2026.

It describes international travelers as "essential to the US economy, spending more, staying longer and supporting jobs and businesses in every corner of the country."

In New York City, international visitors spent over \$26 billion, and another \$25 billion was spent by all other visitors in 2024. Overall



A man walks past a Ferris wheel at Coney Island in New York City on Tuesday. SPENCER PLATT / GETTY IMAGES

spending by tourists is estimated to drop by \$4 billion this year.

Visits to the United States by Chinese and international tourists were down at the beginning of this year compared with 2024.

Globally, Chinese tourists collectively spent \$196.5 billion in 2023 on international travel, a report by the UN Tourism found.

US Travel Association Executive Vice-President Tori Emerson Barnes told China Daily that before the pandemic, China was one of the "fastest growing markets to the US" with Chinese tourists spending more on average than visitors from other countries.

On average, Chinese tourists traveling independently to the US and not as part of a group tour, spent around \$10,445 per trip in 2023, according to the National Travel and Tourism Office, the agency that monitors tourism within the US Department of Commerce.

"Yet, international visitation remains well below 2019 levels and continues to decline," the US Travel

Association said. "In 2024, the US welcomed 72.4 million international visitors, 7 million fewer than in 2019."

Most US airlines have also signaled that they expect a sluggish year ahead. Delta, American Airlines and Southwest cut their 2025 financial forecasts as the outlook looks uncertain.

But in a bright spot, two US airlines will expand flights to Beijing and Shanghai this year after China changed its travel policy to allow foreign tourists to visit the country visa-free for up to 10 days.

China updated its visa-free transit policy in December to allow tourists from 54 countries, including the US, to travel for up to 240 hours to 24 Chinese provinces.

Annabelle Aston, director of International Communications at United Airlines, told China Daily that United Airlines launched "the new flight between Los Angeles and Beijing on May 1. It will operate three times weekly on a Boeing 787-9 aircraft."

BUSINESS

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Experts: Nation leads in green industry practices

By ZHENG XIN
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

International energy agencies have highlighted China's essential role in leading the global shift toward sustainable practices, citing the country's accelerated uptake of grid expansion and renewable capacity additions as a formidable example for the world.

Speaking at the International Forum on Power System Transformation 2025 in Beijing on Tuesday, co-hosted by State Grid Corp of China and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Francesco La Camera, director-general of IRENA, said: "China's accelerated uptake of grid expansion and renewable capacity additions serves as a formidable example."

Of the significant increase in global renewable power generation capacity, the majority of this growth has come from China, he said.

He commended China's "huge efforts" in driving clean energy transition, particularly in strengthening infrastructure to integrate large-scale renewable energy, setting a "model for the world."

China has built over half a million kilometers of transmission lines in the past decade, accounting for more than a third of global additions, with ultra-high voltage (UHV) lines effectively connecting renewable-rich western and northern



Technicians install solar panels at a saltern in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

regions with eastern demand centers, he said.

China, with massive investments and technological advances, has dramatically transformed its power grid security and reliability in recent years and now boasts the world's highest voltage levels, largest renewable energy integration and most robust resource allocation capabilities.

Currently, China has become the country with the largest scale of new energy connected to the grid globally and the fastest development speed. Technological innovation provides strong support for the safe and stable supply of electricity and for green, low-carbon development.

The country's grid companies, including State Grid Corp of China, have also been actively stepping up investment in the construction of UHV power transmission projects, or the power transmission lines operating with greater than 800 kilovolts of direct current (DC), or 1,000 kV of alternating current (AC),

enabling efficient long-distance transmission of massive amounts of power.

With the deepening energy revolution, new technologies and models like smart grids, new energy storage and virtual power plants are continuously surfacing. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, and their integration throughout the power sector, is driving a new wave of innovation in power technology.

Compared with traditional transmission lines, UHV lines not only increase transmission capacity and extend transmission distances, but also reduce transmission losses. This technology is crucial for connecting remote renewable energy sources in the west to demand centers in the east.

In recent years, China has been continuously improving the layout of power transmission. By the end of 2024, the country had completed and put into operation 42 UHV AC/DC projects, including 38 by State

Grid Corp of China and four by China Southern Power Grid, with cross-provincial and cross-regional power transmission capacity exceeding 340 million kW.

Angela Wilkinson, secretary-general and CEO of the World Energy Council, said that the world is at a critical juncture in energy transition and that China's energy journey is "shaping the global energy landscape."

Wilkinson added that the State Grid has the potential to become a "founder of the next stage of the global energy governance system."

Wan Jinsong, deputy head of China's National Energy Administration, affirmed that actively addressing climate change and accelerating energy transition have become the global consensus.

China is building a new power system in line with global energy development trends and the country is willing to cooperate with other countries on energy technology innovation, Wan said.

New deal with ASEAN to lift free trade

Seen expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in emerging sectors

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The expected implementation of the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement later this year will send a strong signal to the world in support of free trade and open cooperation, the Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday.

Commerce and trade ministers from China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations jointly announced on Tuesday the official conclusion of talks for this upgraded free trade deal via an online meeting, said the ministry in a statement.

China and the 10 ASEAN member states will expedite their respective domestic administrative and legislative procedures and work toward formally signing the upgraded protocol by the end of this year, said the statement.

At a time when global trade is facing major challenges, the successful conclusion of negotiations between the two sides reflects the broader trend toward openness and cooperation. It underscores the resilience of free trade and brings greater certainty to both regional and global economic landscapes, said the MOC.

China and ASEAN launched negotiations for the upgraded trade deal in 2022. The two sides jointly declared the substantial conclusion of the negotiations in Vientiane, Laos, in October 2024. Following this development, both sides accelerated consultations on the remaining provisions of the upgraded protocol and the chapter on the digital economy.

Huo Jianguo, a researcher at the China Society for World Trade Organization Studies, said this move sends a strong message against unilateralism and protectionism, reaffirming both sides' commitment to free trade and open cooperation.

By jointly advancing supply chain resilience and connectivity, the upgraded agreement offers a powerful response to external attempts at "decoupling" and supply chain disruptions, while promoting greater synergy across

regional industrial and supply networks, said Huo.

Version 3.0 covers nine areas, encompassing both existing fields under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement and emerging sectors with significant potential for cooperation, including the digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, trade facilitation, and economic and technical cooperation, the ministry added.

Building on the foundations of the existing China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, these advancements significantly expand mutually beneficial cooperation in emerging sectors, enhance alignment in standards and regulations, and promote trade facilitation and inclusive development, said Cai Hongbo, director of the Free Trade Zone Research Center at Beijing Normal University.

The upgrade marks a pioneering step toward deeper regional economic integration and reinforces ongoing collaboration between China and ASEAN across industrial and supply chains, said Cai.

In the first four months, ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner, with total trade between the two sides reaching 2.38 trillion yuan (\$329.62 billion), up 9.2 percent year-on-year, accounting for 16.8 percent of China's total foreign trade value, said the General Administration of Customs.

Zhejiang Sharbo Electric Appliance Co Ltd, a Ningbo, Zhejiang province-based household appliances manufacturer, welcomed the conclusion of the version 3.0 negotiations as an encouraging development, according to information provided by Ningbo Customs.

"In the past, our exports were primarily focused on traditional markets like Europe and the United States. However, with rising risks of tariff barriers, we have been actively exploring emerging markets. Our air conditioners have already gained a foothold in ASEAN markets such as Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia," said Gao Feiji, the company's foreign trade director.

CEEC doing brisk business with China

By ZHONG NAN
in Ningbo, Zhejiang province

Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) are set to attract more Chinese businesses seeking trade and investment opportunities across the region, said market watchers and domestic exporters, noting that strong economic complementarity will meaningfully contribute to both regional and global economic development.

Speaking ahead of the fourth China-CEEC Expo in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province, which runs from Thursday to Sunday, they said that against the backdrop of global economic challenges and trade policy uncertainties in the United States, companies from both sides are working to consolidate and expand their presence in each other's markets.

The CEEC offers a compelling combination of manufacturing capabilities, innovation potential and access to the broader European market, said Wan Zhe, a professor specializing in

regional economic development at Beijing Normal University.

Combined with China's well-developed industrial base and growing demand for high-quality imports, and the connectivity offered by the China-Europe freight train service, Wan said the two sides present significant synergies in sectors such as green energy, digital technologies, healthcare and advanced manufacturing.

Sang Baichuan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' Institute of International Economy in Beijing, said that rising uncertainty over US trade policy is driving companies in China and the CEEC to lessen their dependence on single markets and strengthen bilateral ties.

"This includes co-developing products, establishing joint ventures and enhancing infrastructure connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative," said Sang.

Events like the China-CEEC Expo also serve as vital platforms for showcasing technological advances and

forging cross-border business partnerships, he added.

According to the organizers, the fourth China-CEEC Expo spans 80,000 square meters this year, with the newly launched "Smart CEEC" section standing out as a key highlight. It features nearly 100 cutting-edge technologies and products from China and the CEEC, covering areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics and general aviation technology.

The CEEC is showcasing a range of innovative technologies, particularly in the fields of aviation and biomedicine, including a light aircraft from Austria, maritime safety sensors from Serbia and medical equipment from Slovakia.

Reflecting the deepening economic ties behind such exchanges, Zhejiang, a major hub for China-CEEC trade, saw robust growth in the first four months, with more than 20,000 foreign trade companies engaged in import and export activities with the CEEC, data from Hangzhou Customs showed.

In the meantime, Zhejiang's January-April total foreign trade with the CEEC reached 62.6 billion yuan (\$8.69 billion), marking an 11.6 percent year-on-year increase. The province ranked second nationwide in both overall trade volume and exports to the CEEC.

Zhejiang Sanhua Commercial Refrigeration Co Ltd, a Shaoxing, Zhejiang-based manufacturer of intelligent control components for commercial and industrial refrigeration, saw its exports to the CEEC exceed 70 million yuan between January and April, a year-on-year increase of nearly 40 percent.

"Thanks to the continued advancement of cooperation between China and the CEEC, we have built up a solid customer base in countries like Poland, Slovakia and Hungary," said Wang Chunlan, a manager at the company's foreign trade unit.

According to data from Hangzhou Customs, Zhejiang exported 30.81 billion yuan worth of electromechanical products to the CEEC in the first four months, soaring 15.8 percent year-on-year, and accounting for 54.2 percent of the province's total exports to the region.

SAIC Maxus launches RV exports

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn

In the high-tech zone of Liyang under Changzhou, Jiangsu province, SAIC Maxus Automotive RV Tech Co's production base buzzes with activity as an automated assembly line efficiently puts together motorhomes.

The company's self-propelled motorhomes have recently made their way to Australia, marking China's inaugural large-scale export of such vehicles.

Back in 2017, SAIC Maxus made a hefty investment of 1.7 billion yuan (\$236 million) to establish the country's premier customized recreational vehicle (RV) research and production hub. With over 600 million yuan poured into research and development, the company has nurtured a workforce of more than 700 specialized professionals.

Breaking through the self-imposed barriers from chassis design to overall vehicle manufacturing, the product range of SAIC Maxus now spans Type B, Type C, pickup RVs and trailer models.

While RV culture boasts a centu-

ry-old legacy in Europe and the United States, it remains a niche sector in China.

Prior to 2010, the Chinese RV market heavily relied on imports, with domestic RVs primarily centered around modifications and lacking independent R&D capabilities.

Yang Weisong, product delivery director of SAIC Maxus, emphasized the company's commitment to aligning with Australian market regulations and user needs during the product development phase.

Yang said the focus has been on achieving "design compliance" from the outset, rather than retrofitting post-production.

Following six months of intensive research, numerous visits to campsites and dealers, and participation in five car show exchanges, the company has seamlessly integrated Chinese smart technology and energy management advantages into its products.

The company's global approach ensures a supply chain, certification and after-sales service network with a global reach, promising a hassle-free experience for customers.

Moreover, in adherence with Australian and New Zealand regulations, over 50 specialized certification tests were conducted on exported RVs, leading to adjustments in chassis, upper installations and other system designs to meet compliance standards.

By collaborating with certified Australian engineers and obtaining full vehicle compliance certification through the ROVER system, SAIC Maxus maintains strict controls throughout the entire process.

Leveraging its existing network of over 100 service points in Australia, the company has laid out parts and established an after-sales network well in advance.

"In the future, the market outlook of the Chinese RV sector is still considerable," said Yang. "Taking Australia as an example, the number of RVs in Australia exceeds 400,000 with an annual addition of around 50,000 units, providing a stable and continuous growth market base."

Yang added that Australia and New Zealand have a mature campsite network and RV support service system, which create a high-quality environment for RV use.

"The opportunities for Chinese brands are enormous," he said. "Chinese RV products have shown significant technological advantages, especially in areas such as intelligence and energy management."

"It is expected that in the next three-five years, the market share of Chinese brands in the Australian market will rapidly increase, gradually entering mainstream markets."

Liyang's commercial department has played an important role in nurturing a conducive business environment for enterprises venturing into the global market.

By providing policy guidance, financial support, exhibition organization, risk mitigation, streamlined export processes and reduced overseas operating costs, Liyang has paved the way for companies to expand their horizons. Although not a traditional vehicle hub, Liyang has leveraged the mature supply chain of the Yangtze River Delta region and its supportive policies to establish an RV industry cluster.

Dai Yongzhi, president of the Changzhou Automobile Circulation Association, said that in the future, the Chinese RV sector may draw on the experience of new energy vehicles to go global.

Guo Jun contributed to this story.

Health check



The Yuanping Track Division of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd recently arranged for doctors to offer medical advice and basic checkups for employees at Xinzhou, Yuanping and Lingqiu stations. The proactive move is meant to help prevent injuries and illnesses among employees. WANG KANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Wednesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.21 percent to 3387.57 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.14 percent higher at 10294.22 points. The combined turnover of these two indexes stood at about 1.17 trillion yuan (\$162.64 billion), flat from the previous trading day. The ChiNext Index, tracking China's Nasdaq-style board of growth enterprises, gained 0.83 percent

to close at 2065.39 points.

Tax revenue posts growth in April

China's tax revenue increased by 1.9 percent year-on-year in April, marking a shift from decline to growth, official data showed. In the first four months of the year, the country's tax revenue edged down 2.1 percent year-on-year while non-tax revenue increased by 7.7 percent year-on-year, according to data released by the Ministry of Finance.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

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US attempts to disparage BRI will only strengthen its bonds of connectivity

That the Belt and Road Initiative is a *bête noire* of Washington has long been apparent. But US Secretary of State Marco Rubio again expressed its animosity to the BRI while answering questions in two congressional hearings on Tuesday, in which he said that “China doesn’t do humanitarian aid, China does predatory lending — that’s what the Belt and Road Initiative does”.

Washington likes to try and create the impression that the nobility of its actions is beyond reproach. That everything it does is done in a salubrious glasshouse with full transparency. Yet in doing so, it all too often ends up throwing stones at others that crack that veneer.

Such is the case with Rubio’s smearing of the BRI which, while adhering to the familiar template established by the US for its criticism of the initiative, exposed the degree to which Washington is apprehensive about its success.

Supposedly sincere concerns about debt sustainability, transparency, environmental and social impacts, strategic motivations, and lack of reciprocity in China’s approach to infrastructure development and economic cooperation have become part and parcel of Washington’s smearing of China. That’s precisely because the initiative has proved to be such a success as a public good, enhancing connectivity and promoting economic cooperation across Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond to Latin America.

While the US seeks to disparage the BRI, one cannot help but sense that it is spitting out sour grapes. Perhaps if the US had shown the vision and foresight to spend even a fraction of the \$8 billion it spent on its post-9/11 military adventurism on developing infrastructure in the Global South, it would be the one reaping the plaudits for extending a helping hand and boosting global infrastructure connectivity, as well as the tangible rewards of cooperation.

Since its beginnings as part of China’s neighborhood diplomacy, with the aim of reviving the ancient trade routes with countries in its vicinity, the scope and ambition of the BRI have steadily grown. Today, it has developed into the largest global platform for cooperation with more than 150 countries and 30 international organiza-

tions participating, and institutional frameworks established for debt sustainability and the transition to green development.

While giving voice to Washington’s smearing of the BRI, Rubio had to swallow the fact that “trade not aid is the pillar of US policy in Africa”, as his top Africa official Troy Fitrell said in a speech last week in Abidjan. With that transactional inducement, the US is cutting nearly all its foreign aid, with sub-Saharan Africa being the most affected region, losing billions of dollars in funding that previously supported health, humanitarian and development programs. A New York Times article outlined some of the likely consequences of the move, which include mass famine in Sudan, the collapse of HIV treatment programs in countries such as South Africa, and millions of additional malaria and polio cases.

In the 10-year period to the end of 2022, China’s trade with economies partnering with it under the framework of BRI reached \$19.1 trillion. But as well as trade, China’s support for countries participating in the initiative has been comprehensive and multifaceted, aligned with the principle of “planning together, building together and benefiting together”. Given the size of the projects and their effects, the BRI’s infrastructure projects have been the most prominent areas of China’s development assistance which, unlike the traditional Western donor-recipient model, takes the form of capacity-building partnerships in such forms as grants and interest-free loans for schools and hospitals, and disaster relief work. It also provides training programs in fields such as agriculture, public health and governance, with over 500,000 officials and technicians having been trained in China since 2013.

Under these circumstances, it is unfortunate that the US continues to try and peddle misunderstandings and mistrust about China’s contributions to global development. Especially when the US has enshrined the priorities of its own interests in almost everything it does through the administration’s “America First” doctrine.

China continues to contribute its wisdom and solutions for the building of a more just and fairer world order, in which all countries have equal opportunities for development.

Focus on amicable, secure neighborhood

Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar’s three-day visit to China, which started on Monday, apparently aims to reaffirm that his country’s relations with China are ironclad amid the high tensions between Pakistan and India.

In his meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and other Chinese officials on Tuesday, Dar thanked China for its firm support for Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and vowed to further deepen the all-weather strategic partnership between China and Pakistan.

The Chinese side reiterated that it has always taken China-Pakistan relations as a diplomatic priority and is willing to deepen cooperation and promote the building of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

Despite this, those thinking Islamabad is trying to leverage its relations with Beijing to steer the situation in South Asia so that it develops in its favor are misreading the situation.

That Wang stressed China will, as always, firmly support Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity in his meeting with Dar does not mean it has altered its objective and just stance.

As Wang said, China welcomes and supports Pakistan and India in properly handling their differences through dialogue, achieving a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and seeking a fundamental resolving of their differences. This is in the fundamental and long-term interests of both sides, conducive to regional peace and stability, and also the general expectations of the international community.

Dar’s visit goes far beyond bilateral economic scope, as strengthening regional security and anti-terrorism cooperation is high on the agenda, and the core mission of his visit is to carry on the momentum of bilateral development cooperation.

During Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari’s visit to China in February, Beijing expressed its readiness to work with Islamabad to upgrade the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor cooperation, and help Pakistan consoli-

date its development foundations and unleash its development potential.

So deepening pragmatic cooperation related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is high on the agenda of Dar’s visit. During his meeting with Wang, the two sides pledged to double down on their cooperation in the fields of industry, agriculture, energy and mining, human resources development, as well as counter-terrorism and security.

The development of China-Pakistan relations is to promote the common development of the two nations and bring tangible benefits to the two peoples. It does not target any third party, and will help fill in the development gap of the region, which is necessary to eliminate the soil for terrorism, the spark for the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

China adheres to the principle of good-neighborliness and friendship, supports a comprehensive ceasefire, and is willing to provide assistance in maintaining regional stability.

India and Pakistan are both important neighbors of China, neighbors that cannot move away from each other. In that sense, it is good to see that Pakistan and India have agreed to withdraw troop reinforcements deployed during their recent conflict back to their peacetime positions by the end of May.

But it should also be seen that the two sides still lack basic political mutual trust, and the prevalent jingoism in India is not conducive to easing the tensions.

China strongly urges both India and Pakistan to act in the interest of peace and stability, exercise calm and restraint, and take concrete actions to consolidate the ceasefire. They should create more favorable conditions for political settlement of their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from any action that could further escalate tensions.

Allowing the tensions to escalate between two nuclear countries in a region that is home to more than 2 billion people will only risk disaster for the whole world. Both countries should realize that terrorism is a common enemy of humanity, and regional chaos will benefit no country.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Shanghai Spirit guides dream of achieving sustainable prosperity

The fight against poverty remains a shared aspiration for Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states. The 2025 SCO Forum on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, which opened on Tuesday in Xi’an, Shaanxi province, further solidified the willingness of the member states to enhance policy communication, share poverty reduction experience and deepen practical cooperation.

Around 240 participants, including 120 guests from Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Cambodia, attended the forum. China’s achievement in eradicating absolute poverty, a decade ahead of the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, stands as a testament to the effectiveness of its governance model and development philosophy.

According to official data, 98.99 million residents in China’s rural areas were lifted out of poverty, and 832 poverty-stricken counties and 128,000 impoverished villages were removed from the poverty list in 2021. China’s poverty reduction experience offers significant inspiration for SCO member states.

As the rotating chair of the SCO this year, China is ready to help more countries explore poverty reduction and sustainable development paths that suit their national conditions. The country has not only rewritten its own history but also contributed

to global poverty reduction efforts.

China’s poverty reduction strategy, rooted in targeted measures and systemic reforms, offers valuable lessons. By integrating poverty alleviation into broader development plans, China has ensured that no one was left behind, whether through industrial development, education empowerment or social welfare enhancements. International observers have noted that China’s success underscores the importance of strong institutional frameworks and adaptive policymaking.

China has actively shared its expertise within the SCO community. The China-Uzbekistan subcommittee on poverty reduction cooperation that came up during the China-Central Asia Summit in 2023 is the first subcommittee on poverty reduction that China established with other countries at the governmental level. Training programs and workshops on poverty reduction have become vital platforms for SCO officials.

At its core, poverty is a development issue, and the SCO’s focus on sustainable growth aligns with this understanding. As 2025 is designated as the Year of Sustainable Development for the SCO, the bloc has prioritized economic resilience and inclusive progress. China’s commitment to high-quality Belt and Road cooperation has further amplified regional integration, with trade

between China and other SCO member states reaching a historic \$890 billion in 2024.

From the influx of SCO agricultural products into the Chinese markets to the training of agricultural specialists from SCO members, tangible outcomes demonstrate the potential of shared prosperity.

The SCO’s progress in poverty reduction and sustainability reflects the enduring spirit of mutual trust and win-win cooperation. China’s approach, which combines domestic success with international solidarity, exemplifies the vision of “leaving no country behind”. As the SCO enters a new phase of high-quality development, the emphasis on technology, equitable partnerships and sharing of knowledge will be pivotal. By uniting under the banner of the “Shanghai Spirit”, SCO nations can harness collective strengths to address inequality, climate challenges and economic disparities.

China’s journey from poverty to prosperity is not an isolated narrative but an invitation for global collaboration. As SCO countries continue to draw inspiration from China’s model, the path toward a poverty-free future becomes increasingly attainable. The task ahead is to translate lessons into localized strategies, ensuring that development is not a privilege but a universal right.

—ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Gaza an inalienable part of Palestinian territory

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country would allow a “basic amount of food” to enter Gaza after an 11-week-long blockade, but it planned to take “control of all of Gaza”. Israel will continue the war until “total victory is achieved”, he said.

This indicates a likely further worsening of the situation in the Palestinian enclave that is home to 2.1 million Palestinians who have suffered from the conflict and hunger since October 2023.

Rejecting international calls for a ceasefire, the Israeli army has pursued an offensive against Gaza ever since, killing nearly 53,500 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to Palestinian sources.

Notably, one day before Netanyahu’s statement, the US administration indicated it is working on a plan to permanently relocate up to 1 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya, according to US media reports. The plan is under serious consideration as the administration has discussed it with Libya’s leadership, two people with direct knowledge of the plans and a former US official told NBC News.

In exchange for the resettling of Palestinians, the administration would apparently release to Libya billions of dollars of funds that the US froze more than a decade ago.

No final agreement has been reached, and Israel has been kept

informed of the administration’s discussions, the same sources said. So people have enough reason to believe Tel Aviv’s latest attempt to tighten its grip on Gaza and the reported US plan are interrelated.

Tel Aviv’s announcement that it will continue its military operations has been widely condemned, even by some of the US’ allies. The United Kingdom, France, and Canada all issued stern warnings to Israel on Monday, calling for an immediate cessation of military operations in Gaza and the lifting of restrictions on humanitarian aid or face “further concrete actions”.

“We strongly oppose the expansion of Israel’s military operations in Gaza. The level of human suffering in Gaza is intolerable. Yesterday’s announcement that Israel will allow a basic quantity of food into Gaza is wholly inadequate,” the joint statement said.

The three nations also accused Israel of denying vital humanitarian assistance, warning that such actions “risk breaching International Humanitarian Law”.

The Arab League Summit in Baghdad last week also strongly opposed Israel further escalating the tensions in Gaza.

But in a statement issued late on Monday, Netanyahu claimed that the UK-France-Canada joint call for halting the Israeli war on Gaza is “offering a huge prize” for what he called “the genocidal attack” on Israel in

October 2023.

But in fact it is Israel that faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its actions.

Behind the Gaza conflict is the delay in resolving the question of Palestine, and the question of Palestine has always been at the core of the Middle East issue, so until the two-state solution is implemented, the logic of repaying grievance with grievance will not cease and the cycle of violence will not end.

China calls on all parties to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders and to admit Palestine as a full member state of the United Nations.

Israel should stop using retaliation for the Hamas attack in October 2023 as a cover for its plan to annex the Gaza Strip, which is a Palestinian homeland and a part of Palestinian territory.

The US has actually brokered a ceasefire agreement and led the charting of the course for the follow-up negotiations. These diplomatic efforts should continue.

In the process, the principle of “Palestinians governing Palestine” should be upheld in the post-war governance of Gaza in line with the two-state solution with an ultimate goal of achieving peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel, as well as long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC4A 3DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1400 Broadway, Suite 2000,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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One planet, all species living in harmony

Nature is the foundation of civilization and humanity's most powerful ally. From the air we breathe to the food we eat, our lives are inextricably linked with the natural world, and by extension, all other living things which, like us, depend on it for survival.

Natural habitats are not just home to countless species critical to maintaining the delicate balance of the planet's ecosystems, but also act as carbon sinks, protecting us against climate change. Forests alone absorb nearly 16 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, while regulating global temperatures.

However, currently, around the world, from the deepest oceans to the tallest mountains, nature is under immense threat. Biodiversity is in serious decline, with species going extinct at a faster rate than any time in history.

Against this backdrop, the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework — agreed to at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022 under China's presidency — paved a path to better safeguard the planet and promote coexistence with nature. It set 23 specific targets to be achieved by 2030, alongside four long-term objectives for 2050.

While some progress has been made toward achieving these goals, there is still much work to be done. Since 2020, for example, protected areas have increased by less than 0.5 percent globally. This leaves a land area roughly the size of Brazil and Australia combined, and at sea an area larger than the Indian Ocean, to be designated in order to meet the global target of protecting 30 percent of terrestrial, marine and freshwater spaces by 2030.

Sustainably protecting the world's increasingly fragile ecosystems will require significantly enhanced efforts and accelerated actions. To this end, China's continued pursuit of an "ecological civilization" has been an important commitment. Indeed, during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China has made significant strides by improving its natural resource management, establishing conservation systems, and strengthening legislation for protected areas, which currently account for 18 percent of the country's landmass.

Moving ahead, it will be critical to accelerate momentum by building on this work and further expanding conservation efforts to increasingly larger areas to reach the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's 30 percent target.

In doing this, we must recognize that biodiversity conservation goes hand in hand with climate action as two sides of the same coin. Healthy ecosystems provide some of our most effective nature-based solutions for both climate adaptation and reducing emissions. China's announcement that its new national climate action plan to be submitted later this year will include all sectors of the economy and all gases is therefore a critical step, and presents an opportunity to synthesize efforts by including biodiversity as a key priority.

Another way to do this is through financing. Currently, there is a \$700 billion annual funding gap to protect and restore nature. A nature-positive economy could generate more than \$10 trillion in annual business value and create 395 million jobs by 2030. Realizing this, however, will require a reorientation of financial systems away from siloed funding vehicles, and toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals — our global blueprint to ensure the future of both humans and the planet. By adopting integrated financing mechanisms and approaches that comprehensively tackle development challenges, increasing resources can be unlocked for broader impact.

Between 2022 and 2024, the UN Development Programme promoted more than \$870 billion in investments toward the SDGs. In particular, our SDG Investor Maps and SDG Impact Standards have helped identify areas where investment opportunities align with sustainable development needs, and ensure that such investments are clearly linked to measurable social and environmental outcomes.

Similarly, the Kunming Biodiversity Fund announced by China in 2021, and launched last year, provides an international financing vehicle for developing countries

to access additional funding needed to advance conservation efforts.

However, further accelerating financing at the speed and scale needed will require global, collective efforts. To that end, the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in June will be a critical opportunity to unite countries around the world in reforming domestic and international financing and catalyzing greater investments toward sustainability. It will also be an opportunity for large creditor countries to consider debt repurposing to free up more resources for the protection of nature.

Finally, with the rapid emergence of revolutionary new technologies and cutting-edge digital tools, it will be critical to harness the transformative potential of these advancements and direct them toward development challenges, including biodiversity protection. Innovations like artificial intelligence offer ways to process vast amounts of environmental data, identify critical patterns and break down silos that have traditionally hindered conservation. UNDP has support-

ed more than 50 countries in using AI to align national policies with global biodiversity goals. At UNDP, we look forward to continue building on our decades-long partnership with China in strengthening biodiversity protection to advance progress on the SDGs and promote harmony with nature.

We can still protect the planet through meaningful, decisive action, but it must happen now, and it must happen collectively. The stakes have never been higher, but together we can and must turn ambition into impact to create a more inclusive and sustainable future for all life on Earth — one in which nature and humanity will not only coexist, but also thrive.

The author is the UNDP resident representative in China.

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



LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

Zhao Liang

China emerges as global biodiversity champion

China has consolidated its position as a global leader in biodiversity conservation by taking bold and effective actions.

From better protecting endangered species and ecosystems to helping shape landmark global environmental, including biodiversity, agreements, China's achievements underscore its unwavering commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and its vision of building an ecological civilization.

Central to China's success is its pivotal role in uniting more than 190 parties to adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework during the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference. This groundbreaking agreement set the ambitious target of protecting 30 percent of the planet's land and oceans by 2030, marking a milestone in global environmental and ecological governance.

The framework's importance lies in its integrated approach, which goes beyond traditional conservation practices to add new dimensions such as biodiversity recovery, sustainable production and consumption, and climate change governance into the scope of action, aligned with China's "harmony with nature" philosophy.

Domestically, China's "ecological civilization" has emerged as a transformative model for balancing ecological protection and sustainable development, demarcating more than 30 percent of its terrestrial territory as ecologically critical zones. The ECRs' emphasis on real-time monitoring via satellite remote sensing and AI-driven governance platforms sets a

China has launched the Global Biodiversity Framework Action Initiative, too, expediting the implementation of the GBF worldwide.

new standard for transparency and enforcement, narrowing the gaps in global ecological conservation. It not only propels China's progress toward the 30x30 target but also positions the country as a leader in redefining ecological governance.

Besides, China has transformed its ecological commitments into tangible outcomes through large-scale, science-driven initiatives. The Natural Forest Protection Program, launched in 1998, has safeguarded extensive natural forest areas. By banning commercial logging in key regions and launching reforestation campaigns, the program has reversed deforestation trends, reduced soil erosion and lowered annual desertification rates. These efforts have not only restored habitats for endangered species such as the giant panda and crested ibis but also enhanced carbon sequestration, contributing to climate mitigation.

Complementing these efforts, the Grain for Green Program has restored substantial landscapes since 1999 to their original state, creating vast green corridors reconnecting fragmented ecosystems. And recent shifts toward planting mixed-species forests — replacing monoculture plantations — have boosted biodiversity while improving

soil fertility and water retention in pilot regions.

China's protected area system now covers 18 percent of its land and protects more than 90 percent of terrestrial ecosystem types, which include protected areas for flagship species such as the giant panda in collaboration with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park exemplifies this success: The number of Amur tigers increased to 70 in 2023, up 50 percent since 2020, while Amur leopards — once teetering on extinction — now number 80.

In the Sanjiangyuan National Park, the "Water Tower of Asia", the Tibetan antelope population has rebounded, prompting the International Union for Conservation of Nature to downgrade their status from "endangered" to "near threatened". This revival is attributed to habitat restoration, anti-poaching patrolling teams, and community-led conservation programs that incentivize herders to protect wildlife.

China has made great strides in addressing agricultural issues, one of the primary reasons for the loss of biodiversity, by leveraging comprehensive policies and effective practices. The country has drastically reduced pesticide and fertilizer use, with pesticide use decreasing by 31.4 percent from 2013 to 2021 and fertilizer use peaking in 2015. China is now the world's fourth largest organic agriculture producer.

As the world's largest importer of agricultural products, China has been engaging in the conservation of global tropical rainforests by improving the transparency and sustainability of its supply chains in partnership with international organizations such as the

WWF. These efforts align with global biodiversity targets, demonstrating China's commitment to balancing agricultural productivity with ecological health.

Globally, China's Kunming Biodiversity Fund, backed by an initial pledge of 1.5 billion yuan (\$207.86 million), has become a cornerstone of South-South cooperation. It has approved or set aside in 2024 a total of \$202 million for 40 projects in 41 countries and 36 percent of the total resources have been programmed for LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and SIDS (Small Island Developing States). China has launched the Global Biodiversity Framework Action Initiative, too, expediting the implementation of the GBF worldwide.

As the 2030 deadline for global biodiversity targets approaches, China's vision of ecological civilization — prioritizing harmony between humans and nature — stands as a beacon of hope. From restoring forests that buffer against climate disasters to helping revive once endangered species' populations, China's contributions to global environmental protection and biodiversity conservation demonstrate that environmental stewardship and sustainable development are not competing goals but mutually reinforcing imperatives. In an era of escalating ecological crises, China's story shows that collective action, guided by policy and scientific approach, can forge a path toward a thriving planet.

The author is the priority project coordinator for Policy Advocacy and Green Finance at the WWF, China.

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

Pasja Plevnik

EU, US on the road to 'rivals and partners'

It has become fashionable to say the European Union is collapsing. It is true that the EU is facing significant pressure due to the change in the nature of its relationship with the United States and the re-arrangement of the global balance of power, but that does not signify the beginning of the end for its global political influence nor does it mean the EU economy is in disarray.

The most pressing risk the EU faces is not whether it will remain a global power, but what kind of power it will become given the US' intent to overhaul the EU-US trade and military relations. US President Donald Trump's aim to reduce cooperation with the EU may have a historical dimension, but Trump's opinion on the issue can change overnight or even lead to a free trade agreement between Washington and Brussels.

For the EU, like for any other economy, it is painful to guess what Washington would do tomorrow, in order to expand US trade and boost its manufacturing economy. The EU's response to the US' "Liberation Day" tariffs has highlighted the unity among the EU member states and respect for the bloc's rules. Among the most serious problems facing the EU is the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has exposed the differences within and outside the bloc and raised the cost of living in Europe.

The EU leadership's performance vis-à-vis the Russia-Ukraine conflict has raised serious questions despite being influenced, many a time, by US pressure. While the EU leadership alone cannot resolve the geopolitical crisis in Europe, the US administration has created a weird situation for the bloc by negotiating peace with Moscow. If Washington continues to "welcome all efforts that lead to the end of the conflict in Ukraine", it would create a real opportunity for the EU to get back to the path of peace.

But the EU is not humbled by its failure. Instead, it is considering how best to regroup to fight with Russia "for as long as it takes". The EU leadership's intention to prolong the conflict may be a ploy to prevent discussions on its poor geopolitical judgments and decisions in Eastern Europe.

Some other EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, which have been calling for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the battlefield and strengthened their strategic position by taking advantage of their transatlantic partnership during the former Joe Biden administration, now see the US' "pursuit of peace" in the EU as a betrayal of the EU.

Some European politicians and observers think the US-Ukraine minerals (including rare earths) deal is not in the EU's interest, because the bloc, too, is interested in pursuing critical raw-material deals with resource-rich Ukraine, so as to expedite its green and digital transition. Now that Ukraine has struck a deal to supply minerals including rare earths to the US, it might become an empty shell if it joins the EU in 2030 as some claim.

The US and the EU have other differences as well. For instance, the EU does not share the current US administration's views on climate change, immigration, and its intention to acquire Greenland, Canada and the Panama Canal. Relations between the two sides have deteriorated to such an extent that some European airlines are now reporting a decline in transatlantic bookings, especially on flights from Europe to the US.

In such circumstances, the EU should give a strategic response to the White House, as their current relationship is that of "rivals and partners". Not surprisingly, in its relations with the US, the EU is now feeling what China has been experiencing in its relations with the US for some time.

For the EU, it may appear unthinkable, but the US is capable of drawing a dividing line through the center of the Western world. The crisis in the transatlantic partnership, which aptly defines the relationship between the US and the EU, has gone beyond the disagreements over trade and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The crisis is not a one-off phenomenon. Remember the "pivot to Asia" strategy of former US president Barack Obama — in the US' "grand strategy", Europe is behind Asia, and the current US administration has intensified that strategy.

The EU tends to downplay the strategic implications of the US' policy toward the EU, including the bloc's stability and its long military partnership, cultural affinity with and political trust in the US. The EU has sacrificed a lot to build a partnership with the US. That's why it finds it difficult to accept that US-EU relations have soured. It has given the US many concessions, broken many promises to build an independent security shield and weakened multilateralism within the bloc by supporting the US' unipolar strategy.

Although the fact that the US resorts to realpolitik has been exposed to a great extent, the EU continues to stick to its perception of the US as an ally and a permanent military and economic leader of the world.

The author, founder and president of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia, contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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Winds of change

In response to US tariffs, the EU should improve its relations with the rest of the world

In recent years, European leaders have often claimed that China has been pursuing its political interests too assertively. They allege that China has been trying to reshape the existing rules-based international order, with dire consequences for European and global security. Europe's economic dependence on China has also grown in recent years

and some European leaders therefore called for de-risking from China.

For eight consecutive years, from 2016 to 2023, China was Germany's largest partner in terms of trade in goods. When it emerged earlier this year that the United States replaced China in this position in 2024, a sigh of relief could be heard in political circles in Berlin. At last, the de-risking recommended in the German government's 2023 strategy on China had apparently produced the "desired result".

But the relief was short-lived. On April 2, the so-called Liberation Day, the US administration set out to upend the international trade order that had served the world, including the US, so well for decades. European leaders were quick to criticize the tariffs announced — and temporarily suspended since — by the US. But one might pause for a moment to consider what their reaction would have been if — just imagine — it had been China doing something remotely similar. The outcry in Brussels is easy to imagine.

Now it is not China that is threatening the global economy, but the US. The new coalition in Germany was apparently ill-prepared for this. In its coalition agreement, negotiated in April and signed in May, it states that the transatlantic alliance with the US is a "great success story for both sides" that must be continued "under the new conditions". Regarding trade and investment relations with China, the coalition proclaims that it will reduce unilateral dependencies and pursue a policy of de-risking. Given the chaos currently emanating from Washington, this makes for awkward reading: Germany would clearly be better advised to reduce its unilateral dependence on the US and build on the success of its relations with China.

European politicians cannot even claim to have been surprised by this development. It has been well known for years that Europe, and especially Ger-

many, has been overly dependent on the US for its exports of goods, especially automobiles. The same is true of Europe's dependence on the US for digital services and, most importantly, military security. The US administration has repeatedly let it be known that it sees tariffs as a panacea for the US economy, and that good relations with its partners in NATO and the EU are not among its priorities. But apparently few politicians in Europe took it seriously.

German companies, however, were more cautious: While EU flows of foreign direct investment to China have declined in recent years, German companies have continued to invest record amounts to improve their chances in the Chinese market. Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen announced further investments, as did German chemical giant BASF and many smaller "hidden champions". German companies continue to take a long-term "in China, for China" perspective, successfully localizing production and innovation to adapt to the growing Chinese economy. In doing so, they are preparing to compete with Chinese companies in the Chinese market and, perhaps more importantly, in third country markets in the Global South.

Especially after the "Liberation Day" tariffs, Europe will have to look out for itself by improving its trade relations with the rest of the world, in particular with China. In contrast to Washington's disruptive behavior, Beijing presents an image of stability, modernity, predictability and continued growth.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has shown more wisdom than the German coalition. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, she declared: "2025 marks 50 years of our union's diplomatic relations with China. I see it as an opportunity to engage and deepen our relationship with China, and where possible, even to expand our trade and investment ties." Ursula von der Leyen and Chinese Premier Li Qiang recently agreed to hold an EU-China summit in July.

The big question now is whether the EU and China can bridge their many differences to jointly resist the US' tariffs. While some concerns persist regarding trade practices and market openness, both Europe and China have expressed a commitment to constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. The Brussels-based think tank Bruegel recently concluded that fears of trade diversion from China are

probably overblown. There are simply not that many Chinese products exported to the US that would compete with European products. Tellingly, in April 2025, Chinese exports to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations rose by 20.8 percent year-on-year — but Chinese exports to the EU just by 8.3 percent.

In his first government declaration on May 14, the new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pointed out that China will remain an important partner for Germany and the EU for global issues and the economy. To promote long-term mutual benefit, Europe and China should therefore consider a cooperative understanding that ensures open markets on both sides and addresses concerns over potential trade realignments resulting from recent geopolitical disruption: Brussels removes its tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, while Beijing withdraws the trade cases it recently launched against EU products. Both open even further to investment from the other. Finally, the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, agreed between Chinese and European leaders in 2020, but not ratified by the EU, should be revived.

It may be more challenging for Europe and China to resolve some divisive political issues, but recent developments signal a mutual willingness to enhance dialogue and cooperation. China's decision to lift sanctions on five members of the European Parliament is a welcome step toward strengthening political dialogue; it should be followed by a similar initiative on the part of the Europeans. While challenges remain in areas such as human rights issues and differing perspectives on the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, both sides should reaffirm their shared commitment to uphold the principles of the UN Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, including respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

The author is a former member of the German Foreign Service, an advisory professor at Tongji University and a visiting scholar at the Center for Cultural Studies on Science and Technology in China at Technical University of Berlin. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

FAJAR HIRAWAN

Global South steps forward

'America First' accelerating strategic reorientation away from dependency on US-led systems

Amid the rapidly evolving global landscape, the traditional dominance of Western-led institutions is giving way to a more diversified multipolar order. The Global South — spanning Asia, Africa and Latin America — is increasingly asserting itself as a collective force in shaping global governance, trade and development norms. With rising economic clout, expanding regional blocs and a renewed focus on

strategic autonomy, these nations are no longer passive participants in global affairs. Instead, they are crafting alternative frameworks rooted in equitable cooperation and resilient multilateralism.

Against this backdrop, the return of Donald Trump to the White House in 2025 signals a renewed emphasis on the "America First" doctrine — albeit in a world far more prepared to push back. While the administration initially revived hard-line rhetoric and protectionist impulses, including a proposed blanket tariff on Chinese imports, recent developments suggest a more measured trajectory. Both Washington and Beijing appear to be recalibrating. Rather than escalating into a full-blown trade war, the current dynamic points toward guarded negotiation, supply chain diversification and regional realignment — particularly in the Asia-Pacific region — where many Global South economies are emerging as pivotal stakeholders in the reshaping of global trade flows.

This shift in global dynamics has created space for the Global South to assert itself more cohesively. The expansion of BRICS — welcoming Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates as members — marks a turning point in the international order. Representing nearly half the world's population and over one-third of global output (based on purchasing power parity), the enlarged BRICS grouping has now surpassed the G7 on several economic indicators.

This expanded bloc is more than symbolic. It is actively pushing for structural reform of global institutions. Priorities include increasing the influence of developing economies in the International Monetary Fund and advocating for greater inclusivity within the United Nations — long-standing goals that reflect deep-seated frustrations with the Western-centric architecture of post-war global governance.

Financial sovereignty is also central to this effort. The BRICS-led New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, is accelerating its shift toward issuing loans in national cur-

rencies to shield members from US dollar volatility. A new blockchain-based cross-border payment platform is also under development, aimed at reducing reliance on Western-dominated financial infrastructure such as SWIFT and mitigating the geopolitical weaponization of monetary tools.

Simultaneously, regionalism in Asia has gained new momentum through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Encompassing 15 Asia-Pacific economies — including China, the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand — the RCEP now accounts for about 30 percent of the global GDP and population. For countries, such as Indonesia, this partnership represents not only a practical trade mechanism but a signal of strategic reorientation away from dependency on US-led systems. The RCEP's role in tariff reduction, regulatory alignment and supply chain stabilization makes it a linchpin of regional resilience amid mounting geopolitical uncertainty.

Beyond trade, the diplomatic role of the Global South is also expanding. A notable shift occurred in 2023 when China facilitated a groundbreaking normalization of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This agreement highlighted Beijing's growing influence and the Global South's willingness to lead in conflict resolution.

Across other regions, similar momentum is building. The African Continental Free Trade Area is aimed at unlocking the potential of intra-African commerce and reduce external dependency. Meanwhile, Latin American states are reinvigorating institutions such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States to assert greater control over their regional agenda — away from the fluctuations of US policy.

At the center of this Global South resurgence are China and Indonesia — two nations whose visions of partnership and pragmatism are shaping a multipolar era. China's Belt and Road Initiative, with projects now spanning over 150 countries, continues to set the pace for infrastructure-led development. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, operational since 2023, stands as a flagship of Sino-Indonesian cooperation and a tangible symbol of "infrastructure diplomacy".

Indonesia, led since October 2024 by President Prabowo Subianto, has adopted an "active non-alignment" policy, signaling its intent to engage with all major powers without becoming ensnared in bloc rivalry. By emphasizing ASEAN centrality, enhancing ties with both Washington and Beijing, and expanding its influence within BRICS and the Organiza-

tion of Islamic Cooperation, Jakarta is positioning itself as a critical bridge-builder in this era of multipolar diplomacy.

This geopolitical shift is not only pragmatic, it is also deeply historical. The call to respect diverse development paths resonated across the Global South, particularly in nations that still bear the legacy of colonialism and structural exclusion.

This narrative reinforces the normative foundation for a new international system — one that challenges the premise of a single dominant power and instead seeks a fairer, more balanced global order.

Still, multipolarity is not without its own difficulties. Groups such as BRICS and the RCEP encompass a wide range of political models, economic structures and national interests. Building consensus can be arduous. Moreover, pressing global issues such as climate change, digital regulation and pandemic preparedness require collective responses that transcend ideological and regional divisions.

This was evident at COP29 in 2024, where negotiations faltered over disagreements between developed and developing nations on issues of climate finance and technology transfers. Without new frameworks for coordination and trust-building, such deadlocks may become more common in an increasingly fragmented world.

Nonetheless, the trajectory is clear. The US administration's reassertion of its unilateralism has acted as a powerful catalyst, galvanizing the Global South into action. Rather than waiting on the sidelines, these countries are taking the initiative — expanding economic cooperation, forging alternative financial systems, and strengthening regional institutions.

China, as a principal architect, and Indonesia, as a strategic bridge, are playing pivotal roles in driving this transformation. Together with other emerging powers, they are forging a global compact grounded in equity, sovereignty and mutual respect. The road ahead may be complex, but the direction is clear: the era of Western-dominated global governance is giving way to a more inclusive and balanced international system, one that reflects the true diversity of the modern world.

The author is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Indonesian International Islamic University and a member of the advisory board at the Reform Initiatives, Indonesia. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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LIFE

Peking University is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Peking University Hall this year, which is not only a landmark of the prestigious institution, but also a venue for college aesthetic cultivation.

In collaboration with organizations including the National Ballet of China, the China National Symphony Orchestra, and the China National Opera House, hundreds of lectures and performances are held at the hall every year, in addition to film screenings with guided interpretation by critics and film industry insiders.

This semester, 41 performances and 15 screenings, as well as exhibitions about the hall's history and of art based on the stories of students and staff, will be organized in honor of its anniversary.

Recently, the venue hosted 75-year-old Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer and Germany's Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra that performed Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No 9* on May 13. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Yue Opera House performed traditional Yueju Opera adaptations of the classic Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and mythical story *The Butterfly Lovers* on April 25-26.

During a forum on May 13 to celebrate the anniversary and discuss the hall's future, Min Weifang, former Party secretary of Peking University, said that it has become a vital platform for liberal arts education.

For the university, it serves the internal need for aesthetic cultivation and the training of well-rounded talent, while also acting as a window to external cultural exchange, and generates a positive impact on the university's international reputation, Min adds.

A seminar attended by representatives from universities and art institutions was also held, during which topics such as how university theaters can fulfill their roles in aesthetic cultivation, integrate resources, promote innovation and tackle challenges were discussed.

Peking University has more than a century's experience in aesthetic cultivation. After taking the position as university president in 1916, prominent educator Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) started art courses and since 1917, founded research groups in fields such as painting, calligraphy, music and traditional opera.

In 1923, the university set up an orchestra, first conducted by composer Xiao Youmei (1884-1940). According to a Guangming Daily report, it was the first professional orchestra organized by Chinese musicians, and performed not only on campus but also for the wider audience. The orchestra's repertoire included symphonies from the Western classical and Romantic periods such as those written by Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as orchestral works composed by Xiao.

In the 1950s, a large timber dining hall capable of accommodating thousands was built. It gradually became the venue for major university events and academic, cultural, and recreational activities.

The current Peking University Hall is situated on the original site of the former dining hall, and has inherited its cultural role on campus.

It was completed in 1999 and officially put into use in 2000, with a



The National Ballet of China performs the classic show, *Giselle*, at Peking University Hall on April 11. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A celebration of artistic achievements

Peking University Hall looks back on 25 years of pushing the boundaries of cultural education, **Fang Aiqing** reports.



Peking University is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the operation of Peking University Hall this year. Around 5,000 artistic activities have taken place there since 2000 to enhance college aesthetic cultivation.



Left: Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer leads Germany's Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra at the hall on May 13. **Right:** Film critic and Peking University professor Dai Jinhua's guided film screening series has become one of the university's most influential cultural events.



Featuring city life, *Mad Man's Diary* is being staged at Star Theatres.

By **CHEN NAN**
chenнан@chinadaily.com.cn

The stress, the noise, the disconnection — when people talk about cities nowadays, its negative aspects are often emphasized. There's a growing desire to escape and retreat into some countryside idyll, but director Li Yu pushes back against this romanticized idea of "escaping" urban life for a pastoral utopia.

"From the border of my heart, don't believe that's the answer," he says.

One evening, Li stood by the floor-to-ceiling windows of a theater, looking out at an office building. As the lights inside were twinkling, the signs outside glowed, cars moved steadily along the road, and small

restaurants lined the street. "At that moment, I felt the city was truly beautiful. I wanted to use a playful, satirical tone to re-experience and reimagine the place where we live," he says, describing the moment when the idea for a new play occurred to him.

The first thing that came to mind was *Diary of a Madman* by Nikolai Gogol. Li envisioned its famous characters rendered in a comic-book style, reflecting the absurdities and struggles of modern life.

The result is a new play, titled *Mad Man's Diary*, produced by Beijing's Star Theatres, which runs until May 30.

In Gogol's original, the protagonist is a middle-aged, low-level clerk fixated on social status, who gradu-

ally descends into madness. Through diary entries, he shares his delusions: believing that dogs can talk, and later imagining himself as the King of Spain.

Li's stage adaptation, which he both wrote and directed, is set in today's fast-paced world, in which people face constant pressure from work, relationship anxieties, and social expectations.

In this version, there are two characters: the Mad Man, an emotional chaotic dreamer who represents the imagination, fantasy, and even delusion; and Doggie, practically the other half of the same mind, who symbolizes rationality, logic, and being grounded.

The play begins in hyperrealism, portraying ordinary objects from

daily life, but as the Mad Man's fantasies take over, the stage transforms into a comic-book world, making use of stylized visuals, bold colors, exaggerated props, animation, and dramatic shifts in lighting and projection.

Li hopes to show that even in the stress and absurdity of city life, beauty and humor still exist.

In the production, the two endearing characters move through the urban landscape, facing strange and surreal situations. Together, they complain about their boss, grumble about work, chase after love, and search for happiness. They discuss dignity and equality — all through a humorous, lighthearted lens, offering the audience a cheerful and warm evening.



Actor Shan Guanchao in the play. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Directing a play is essentially about having a conversation with the audience."

Li Yu, theater director

Playing on the everyday madness

Li studied at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, and later at the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts. He is now a director at the National Theatre of China.

"Directing a play is essentially about having a conversation with the audience," Li says. "In today's world, making a comedy means offering joy, warmth, and strength, and serves as a way to vent, to complain, to relieve stress."

"When I did the audition, I was asked to read a small paragraph from the script, which deeply intrigued me," says actor Chi Haozhen, who plays Doggie. "The lines resonated with me, and when we performed onstage, I could feel the audience connecting. It felt like we were all sharing a common expe-

rience, united by the pressures we face in life."

As one of the most popular venues in Beijing for small-scale productions, Star Theatres is a cozy setting with only about 100 seats. This intimacy allows the audience to be fully immersed in the performance.

"We run, jump, and move around the theater with the audience just steps away. It's challenging but fascinating," says Shan Guanchao, an actor with the National Theatre of China, who plays the Mad Man.

"There's a lot of humor in the play," Shan adds. "But by the end, the audience walks away with something deeper. When they give the actors their full attention and grasp the meaning of the lines, that is the magic of theater, the emotional resonance."

management department specially formed to facilitate operations. It independently organizes and hosts events, with tickets sold at favorable prices, to promote art and enrich campus culture. Over the past 25 years, it has been host to around 5,000 art activities.

Since 2021, the hall has also invited artists to give experiential courses in fields like vocal and instrumental music, dancing, drama and sculpture.

Film screenings are an important part of events organized by the hall. During this April's Beijing International Film Festival, five films up for the Tiantan Award, the official competition section of the festival, were screened.

On April 30, film critic Dai Jinhua, who is also a professor at the university's Department of Chinese Language and Literature, conducted her 50th guided film screening in the past three years. This series of events has become one of the university's most influential cultural brands.

According to Zhang Yong, deputy director of the Peking University Convention Center, which oversees the hall, more than 100,000 people have attended Dai's series.

Dong Zhenting, who graduated from the university's Law School, says she has regularly attended since the first screening — Oscar-winning *Cinema Paradiso* — in 2022, and still returns.

Zheng Muhan, an undergraduate of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, says Dai's interpretations have made her realize for the first time the public value of film as a form of expression.

"These great films empower me with the confidence and courage to face life, and feed my curiosity and imagination," she says.

The 66-year-old Dai says that despite having given numerous lectures on films throughout her career, she had never shared the emotional resonance following a screening in such a large space, and under the gaze of so many eyes.

"Rather than spreading knowledge or reaching for an aesthetic pinnacle, this series is more about sharing a love for cinema. I expect these films to evoke thought and awe, and through cinema and the passion for it, I hope to inspire a love for the world, life and people," she says.

A new book based on notes from Dai's series is set to be published later this year.

At the forum on May 13, Dong Zhiyong, vice-president of Peking University, said that over the past 25 years, Peking University Hall has blazed a new path for the development of campus cultural and art centers, and provided a reference for the advancement of college aesthetic cultivation.

Hao Fenglin, first-level inspector of the department of physical, health and arts education at the Ministry of Education, expresses hope that university theaters, including the Peking University Hall, will explore and gather artistic resources to support the teaching, creation and promotion of art and culture, while deepening cooperation with both campus and external art institutions to develop replicable models.

Contact the writer at fangaqing@chinadaily.com.cn

LIFE

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Like many families across China, Yang Xiangni, 28, spent the Spring Festival holiday this year with her loved ones, watching the country's biggest box-office sensation, *Ne Zha 2*, in the cinema.

It was Jan 29, 2025 — the first day of the Chinese New Year — and the atmosphere was electric with excitement and anticipation. For Yang, sitting in the theater alongside her family, the experience was far from ordinary.

While the audience around her was swept away by the onscreen spectacle, she had a unique connection to the opening scene — her voice, along with those of her team, echoed throughout the theater, creating a powerful, unforgettable moment.

As the screen lit up, a delicate lotus flower slowly unfurled — a visual metaphor for the film's mystical world. Sung by Yang and her collaborators, the opening song filled the theater with a hauntingly beautiful melody, evoking the ancient and otherworldly essence of the story. The melody, drawn from the traditional Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group, transported viewers to a mythical realm where history and legend intertwine.

The Grand Song, known as Dongzu Dage, is a unique and ancient form of choral music from the Dong ethnic group that primarily lives in the mountainous regions of southern China.

Unlike most traditional Chinese music, which tends to be monophonic (a single melody), the Dongzu Dage is polyphonic, with multiple independent lines sung simultaneously to create a rich, harmonious sound that captivates listeners.

Typically sung a cappella, the harmonies are complex. Singers often rely on their vocal strength and ability to harmonize in ways not commonly found in other traditional music.

In 2009, UNESCO inscribed the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In August 2023, Yang Rui, a composer for *Ne Zha 2*, who focuses on integrating traditional music into film, came across a video on the popular Chinese social media platform Bilibili. It showcased Yang Xiangni and her team performing the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group.

"The raw, natural beauty of the performance immediately captivated me," said Yang Rui in an interview. "The music was perfect for the scene where two characters sit gracefully atop large, radiant lotus flowers. The flowers, delicate yet expansive, add a spiritual aura to the setting."

"When I heard the performance, I was shaken by the sound. I knew this was the voice I had been searching for," Yang Rui added.

Inspired by the idea of blending this ancient musical style with the film's score, Yang Rui reached out to Yang Xiangni, who is deeply involved in preserving Dong culture in her hometown of Rongjiang county, Guizhou province.

"They didn't see any visuals from



Yang Xiangni (third from left) and members of the Wuyue Chan'ge ensemble, a music group founded by Yang in 2023. The ensemble is composed of music graduates and students from Guizhou province's schools. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Dong's Grand Song is a cultural treasure that carries the memories of our ancestors. But it is not an antique in a museum."

Yang Xiangni, musician of Dong ethnicity



Yang Xiangni (left) and her group (middle) on stage and posing (right) for a photo. Fame came knocking as their song featured in the opening of the hit animated film *Ne Zha 2*. The success of their work has given them a wider audience and opened the door to greater opportunities.

the film until the recording was finished. They only had the audio and sheet music — everything else was imagined," recalls Yang Xiangni. "The singing is very different from what we're used to, and there were a lot of key changes. The singing was more difficult."

As *Ne Zha 2* became a massive hit — earning an astonishing 15.8 billion yuan (\$2.19 billion) globally since its Spring Festival debut, making it the world's fifth-highest-grossing film — Yang Xiangni and her team gained recognition, leading to more opportunities to perform nationwide, including Beijing, Suzhou and Yangcheng in Jiangsu province and Nanning in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

"For me and my team, this was more than just a professional collaboration; it was a way to preserve a cultural treasure while sharing it with a global audience," says Yang Xiangni.

Born in Sanbao village in Rongjiang county, Guizhou, home to many of the Dong ethnic group, Yang Xiangni graduated from the music school of Guizhou University in 2020. During her studies, she honed her vocal techniques and immersed herself in the Dong's ancient songs, becoming inspired to preserve her heritage.

"The Dong's Grand Song is a cultural treasure that carries the memories of our ancestors. But it is not an antique in a museum; it is a living, communicative civilization," says Yang, who made her stage debut at age 6.

After graduating, she returned to her hometown and established weekend public welfare classes to teach the Grand Song to children in her village and surrounding areas.

In 2023, she founded the ensemble Wuyue Chan'ge, a music group of graduates and students with a music major in Guizhou's schools, mostly born in the 1990s and 2000s. The group's average age is 25.

Aside from performing, the group visits Dong villages to collect ancient songs at risk of being forgotten. They also use social media to teach Dong music to a broader audience.

"I grew up listening to Dong songs. To me, they are a love that runs deep in my bones," says Luo Youmei, a member of the ensemble and graduate of the music and dance department at Guizhou Minzu University.

"When I learned that the band was dedicated to preserving and promoting Dong songs, it immediately resonated with my own aspirations. Dong songs are cultural treasures that face a crisis of inheritance gaps. I believe their preservation must honor traditional charm while embracing bold innovations."

Contact the writers at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn



Online Scan the code to watch the video.



Culturally symbolic ethnic blanket debuts at London Craft Week

LONDON — A traditional Dulong blanket from one of China's smallest ethnic groups debuted on May 12 at the opening of the China National Pavilion during the 2025 London Craft Week, where 120 handcrafted works were displayed.

The Dulong ethnic group primarily resides in the Ningming Lisu autonomous prefecture of Southwest China's Yunnan province. The Dulong blanket, woven by the women, is a community cultural symbol.

The exhibition in London is supported by the initiative "Mothers' Needlework", launched by China Ping An Group in partnership with the Art and Design Press.

The program aims to promote women's employment and further alleviate poverty.

In his opening remarks, Minister Zhao Fei of the Chinese embassy in the United Kingdom highlighted the shared heritage of craftsmanship from China and Britain. He noted that both countries have splendid traditional artistry, and expressed hope that this year's London Craft Week would deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries.

Qian Zhu, president and editor-in-chief of Art and Design magazine, says that Dulong blankets and their related textiles



Guests in Dulong pattern at the London event on May 12. LI YING / XINHUA

generate annual sales of approximately 500,000 yuan (\$70,000) in the UK. For an ethnic group with a population of just 7,000, the growing domestic and international recognition of Dulong ethnic textiles is a significant achievement.

David Francis, a lecturer of Curating Asian Art at SOAS at the University of London, whose research includes ethnic communities in China's Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, says he was excited to see the textiles he encountered in China being exhibited in London.

Francis emphasizes the importance of integrating traditional crafts with contemporary design to resonate more with

contemporary audiences. The China Pavilion, themed "Tian Gong Kai Wu", is named for the renowned 17th-century Chinese encyclopedia of craftsmanship and technology, widely regarded as the world's first systematic record of China's agricultural and arts history.

Hosted at the historic Royal Mint in London, the exhibition was held on Sunday and included themed events such as "Mothers' Needlework" and "A Magical Leaf from the East", with 80 percent of the showcased works created by emerging artists.

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The self in the age of social media

Play explores the impact of networking sites on students from a teenage perspective, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

The play *Who Am I?* was performed at Beijing's Drum Tower West Theatre on Saturday and Sunday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

While the debate over use of smartphones by children continues, few adults have paused to truly listen to what the young themselves think, or how they experience the digital world.

"I have a stronger sense of presence online. In real life, because I'm not that outgoing, I don't have enough courage to make friends, even if I would like to," says Yu Min-jia, a 12-year-old performer from the DR. Youth Theatre.

"People often feel like they're free when they pick up their phones, when in fact, they have been constrained by them," says Yang Jin-sheng, a fellow performer who is 9, expressing his view.

Over the past nine months, these young actors have been exploring their thoughts on technology, expressing themselves through art and writing, and incorporating their experiences into theatrical roles under the guidance of educational theater facilitators.

The final production, *Who Am I?*, by British playwright Chris Cooper and performed by the DR. Youth Theatre, was held at Beijing's Drum Tower West Theatre on Saturday and Sunday.

A classroom confrontation sets the stage for the drama as one student challenges her teacher's authority. Criticized by the teacher and then bullied by her classmates, she pours ink on one of the bullies and flees to a parallel classroom, where she is alone, yet able to hear her classmates' inner thoughts.

Through this combination of fictional setting and realistic subject, the play takes the audience on an exploration of technology and the impact of social media on teenagers, offering insights into understanding the complex realities of young life.



Left: The production includes a personification of an AI character. **Right:** Young performers from the DR. Youth Theatre, aged between 8 and 13, acted in the play and contributed to its creation.



The play's director Chen Yuan speaks during a Q&A session after the show.

Under the guidance of director Chen Yuan, the young performers, aged between 8 and 13, were encouraged to participate in the creative process by developing their own characters, contributing writing and art to the production, and sharing their perspectives.

"I believe that 'who am I' is a question everyone has asked themselves. This philosophical question, that should be explored over an extended period of time, has become an everyday question due

to the prevalence of social media," Chen says.

Chen, who is also a facilitator at Drama Rainbow Education, the organization producing the play, conducted one-on-one conversations with the young members and their parents before its launch last September.

From these discussions, she learned that many students were experiencing subtle forms of cyberbullying. Unlike direct confrontations that could be reported to teachers, these incidents often remained hidden from adults.

In more than one case, the students changed their profile picture or shared something on social media — a song, a photo — that was then mocked by their peers, leading to distress and isolation.

"I felt with a sense of urgency that today's teenagers are very different from our generation. These days, parents protect their children very carefully in life, but don't know how to monitor them online, often leaving them unsupervised," Chen says.

"As a result, children cannot

express themselves in the real world and turn to the internet. There, they encounter many problems they can't discuss with adults, because adults might dismiss these issues as insignificant."

Chen then shared her concerns about technology and social media with Chris Cooper, an expert in theater in education and a consultant for Drama Rainbow Education, and invited him to write the play.

"We urgently needed a play that responded to the situations these children are facing," she adds.

"Chris Cooper is a remarkable playwright and director with a strong understanding of China. I feel that having such a visionary extract the experiences of today's children and transform them into a play is incredibly important."

When Cooper began researching and working on the play, he was struck by the different perspectives of the older and younger generations. While the older generation tends to make a clear division between the digital world and reality, the young constantly move between the two realms.

"In fact, I'd go further to say that the synthesis between the virtual world and the real world is such now that for our children, it is the reality. It's a profound change in culture and in human consciousness," Cooper says.

Prior to the production, Chen asked Cooper to present a story framework, deliberately leaving space for development.

Through a collaborative creative process with the youngsters, who wrote poems and created drawings and installations, the final production has been enriched by what emerged.

In a creative session, Chen helped the students to each design a desk for their character. They began with sketches on paper, and then turned desks into art installations. Through symbolic elements and hidden objects, the owners' secrets and personal struggles are made apparent.

"When the protagonist pulls objects from the desks, she is able to hear the inner voices of those to whom they belong. These voices are the work of the children themselves.

The creative process is actually an exploration of the feelings experienced by primary and middle school students," Chen says.

"Through the voices, we are able to see that the characters have secrets, weaknesses, and sentiments they can't express to others. Theater helps us understand our children, feel what they feel and better support them."

The production also includes a personified AI character, who appears to talk with the protagonist whenever she encounters a struggle. According to Chen, this is a reflection of the fact that a lot of youngsters now resort to AI chatbots instead of their friends and family when they need to talk with someone.

"But in my conversations with the children, they also said the chatbots can't really solve any problem. They can never replace real human beings, but simply use big data analytics to generate a response. When they are picked on by others, chatbots often tell them to be understanding or reasonable, which they find unhelpful," she says.

Through the performance and creativity of young performers, the play asks the audience, teenagers and adults alike, "who am I" in this world of information overload and increasing dependence on digital tools.

"This play is about how relationships between children are mediated by the tools of social media, and also how the relationship between adults and children is mediated by a deeper crisis, which is an inability to recognize the needs of each other, and be able to speak to each other," Cooper says.

Contact the writer at chengyuezhuzhu@chinadaily.com.cn

By YANG FEIYUE
yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Sports proving to be a tie that binds nations

China and Thailand will work on a series of sports and tourism events, as part of celebrations of the 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations. Cooperation agreements on key events were signed at the 2025 Running and Sports Tourism Exchange Signing Ceremony in Beijing on May 14.

They include the Chongli 168 Ultra-Trail in Hebei province and Chiang Mai by UTMB (a global trail running series and community), as well as the Chiang Mai 24: From Dusk Till Dawn run, and the Xiamen 6 Day Race in Fujian province.

The agreements cover in-depth cooperation in areas such as knowledge sharing, quota exchanges, resource sharing, internationalization efforts, rule refinement, and mutual visits.

"This is more than a provincial-level collaboration. It is a visionary effort to use sports and tourism as tools to strengthen people-to-people exchanges, which lie at the heart of international friendship. Such connections build the cultural and emotional bridges necessary for long-lasting cooperation between our two nations," said Omrisit Phinnasundara Cullen, minister-counselor of Thailand to China, at the ceremony that was cohosted by the Chiang Mai Provincial Administrative Organization, the Sports Authority of Thailand, and the Beijing office of Tourism Authority of Thailand.

The event was a showcase of the



Left: Representatives from China and Thailand launch the 2025 Running and Sports Tourism Exchange Signing Ceremony in Beijing on May 14. **Right:** Thai food is a highlight during the ceremony. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



deep friendship and bilateral ties between China and Thailand, and was designed to enhance the race experience for Chinese runners and to help Chinese brands expand into Southeast Asian markets.

Cullen emphasizes that this cooperation marks a crucial step, demonstrating the power of sports and tourism as instruments for creating mutual benefits based on the strong and enduring relationship between the two countries.

It also aligns with the Thai government's goal of promoting sports tourism and elevating Thailand as a prominent sports and wellness tourism hub in Asia, by synergizing the potential of Chiang Mai in terms of its nature and culture with the world-class expertise of the Chinese

private sector in organizing sporting events, she says.

Nittaya Kerdjuntuk, director of the Office of the Professional Sports Committee, Sports Authority of Thailand, says that last year's Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc series event held in Chiang Mai welcomed over 7,000 participants from around the world.

"I was especially pleased to see that more than 2,600 of them came from China," she says.

"This shows the immense enthusiasm of Chinese athletes, and the strong connection between our two nations."

Kerdjuntuk says that Thailand is committed to a five-year development plan aimed at transforming Chiang Mai into a premier destination for both runners and tourists.

"We're working in collaboration

with the government and local businesses to make this vision a reality," she says.

Highlighting the strong friendship between Thailand and China, Kerdjuntuk says she's looking forward to more joint initiatives in the future.

"Our two countries have long enjoyed deep and friendly ties. In the years ahead, we plan to host joint expos and industry events to promote economic and cultural cooperation.

"We want Chiang Mai to become a vibrant hub for such exchanges, and I sincerely hope both countries will continue to achieve greater results through sports and cultural exchanges."

Pichai Lertpongadisorn, president of the Chiang Mai Provincial Administrative Organization, con-

veyed his aspirations of strengthening Sino-Thai friendship through sporting endeavors, while simultaneously fostering running culture and the growth of sports tourism.

Chinese sports experts highlighted the rapid growth of the country's events sector and its economic ripple effects at the ceremony, saying that marathons and trail races have emerged as flagship models of the country's "sports-plus" economy. They believe bilateral cooperation will unleash more market potential.

Yang Yucheng, vice-president of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics Alumni Association, and a seasoned ultramarathon runner, says the running economy is booming in both China and Thailand.

"When a city hosts a marathon or

cross-country race, it attracts large numbers of participants and spectators. This immediately drives demand for accommodation, food, transport and tourism. It creates a very visible economic ripple effect," Yang says.

He calls attention to the Wuxi Marathon in Jiangsu province in March, which reportedly generated nearly 500 million yuan (\$69.3 million) in local spending. In 2024, that figure was just over 300 million yuan.

"That's a huge jump, largely driven by the race's growing popularity and the influx of participants and their families, who also come to enjoy the cherry blossoms and local attractions," he explains.

While the pace of growth in running-related spending in China is impressive, he believes the sector still hasn't fully explored the potential of integrating tourism with sports events.

"There's a lot of room for improvement and innovation here," he says, adding that because of this potential, expectations from race organizers on both sides are high.

Cullen believes the signing of the bilateral cooperation agreement shows sports are more than competition, and serve as powerful tools for building relationships, creating social networks, and promoting sustainable economic, social, and cultural development within cities.

She expresses hope that the signing ceremony will mark not only the start of a fruitful collaboration, but also a new chapter in shared development and the exchange of knowledge between Asian cities.

Fatal attack

Two Israeli embassy staffers shot dead in Washington, DC
WORLD, PAGE 9



Low-carbon lifestyles gain extra credit
GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



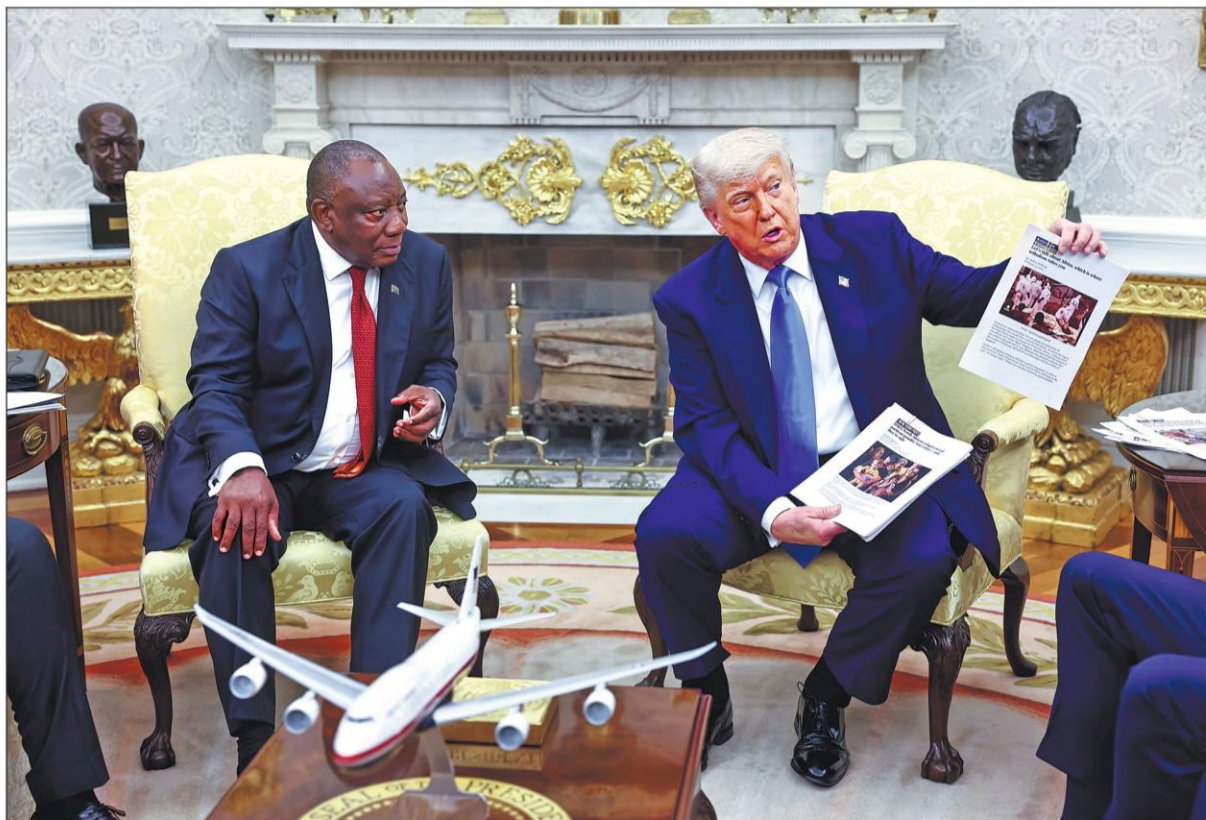
Courting battle

Zheng leads a determined squad to Roland Garros show
SPORTS, PAGE 16

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025



United States President Donald Trump presents South African President Cyril Ramaphosa with printed articles that he claimed documented a genocide targeting white South Africans, during their meeting on Wednesday in the Oval Office of the White House, Washington, DC.
JIM LO SCALZO / UPI PHOTO VIA NEWS.COM

Ramaphosa firmly denies Trump claims of white genocide

United States President Donald Trump confronted visiting South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Wednesday with explosive but unfounded claims of "white genocide" in South Africa, charges that Ramaphosa firmly denied.

During a tense meeting at the White House, Trump pounced, moving quickly to a list of concerns about the treatment of white South Africans, which he punctuated by playing a video and leafing through a stack of printed news articles that he claimed proved his allegations.

With the lights turned down at Trump's request, the video, played on a television that is not normally set up in the Oval Office, showed white crosses on the side of a road, which Trump asserted were the graves of white people, and opposition leaders making incendiary speeches.

The video was made in September 2020 during a protest after two people were killed on their farm a week earlier. An organizer of the protest told South Africa's public broadcaster at the time that they represented farmers who had been killed over the years.

"We have many people that feel they're being persecuted, and they're coming to the United States," Trump said.

Ramaphosa, who arrived in Washington prepared for an aggressive reception and with hopes of improving trade terms and easing bilateral tensions, rejected Trump's allegations during the meeting. He refuted the notion that white South

Africans are fleeing the country due to racist policies. He said there was crime in South Africa, but the majority of the victims were black.

Trump's aggression and rudeness, reminiscent of his February meeting with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, shocked observers. Most media outlets said that the information that Trump used during the meeting to try to prove that "white genocide" was happening in South Africa had "repeatedly been disproven".

"Of the laundry list of conspiracy theories brought out at Trump's meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa today, almost everything has been debunked. Some South Africans have said that they believe that the information is 'AfriForum propaganda.'" CNN reported. AfriForum is a White Afrikaner lobby accused of being a White nationalist group.

Abbey Makoe, CEO of Global South Media Network in South Africa, said the allegation that minority Afrikaner farmers were being persecuted was a lie.

The lie was fabricated amid worsening relations between the US and South Africa, fueled by South Africa's move to haul US-backed Israel before the International Court of Justice on charges of genocide against the Palestinian people, he said.

"The saga of the Afrikaner minority, largely from the farming community, is therefore a convenient excuse to pounce on Pretoria with a harsh public relations campaign aimed at causing reputational harm," he said.

Ever since Ramaphosa signed the Expropriation Act into law in January, Trump has criticized the land reform law for "discriminating" against the country's white people.

In recent months, Trump has repeatedly criticized South Africa, most notably by canceling the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief funding and claiming that a "genocide" against white South Africans is underway — an allegation denied by the South African government.

In March, the US expelled then South African ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, further straining relations. The expulsion came after Rasool addressed a webinar organized by the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection, commenting on the Trump administration.

"What Donald Trump is launching is an assault on incumbency, those who are in power, by mobilizing supremacism against the incumbency at home," Rasool had said during the webinar.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that Trump would not participate in the upcoming meeting of the Group of 20 leaders in South Africa later this year.

"We decided not to participate in this year's G20 hosted by South Africa, either at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or at the level of the president, and this was largely due to some of these issues that they put on their agenda and which, as we think, they do not reflect the priorities of this administration," Rubio told a Senate Foreign

Relations Committee hearing.

South Africa has pushed back against the Trump administration's accusations, saying the executive order of freezing aid "lacks factual accuracy and fails to recognize South Africa's profound and painful history of colonialism and apartheid."

South African foreign ministry spokesperson Chrispin Phiri defended Ramaphosa's handling of Wednesday's meeting.

"It's not in the president's (Ramaphosa's) nature to be combative. (He) looks at issues calmly, matter-of-factly. I think that's what we (should) expect of our presidents," he said.

Many in South Africa were baffled that the world's most powerful man could believe easily disproved claims about the ethnic cleansing of white South Africans that circulate on far-right social media.

Most victims of violent crime in South Africa are black and poor. South African police recorded 26,232 murders nationwide in 2024, of which 44 were linked to farming communities. Of those, eight of the victims were farmers.

"I think Trump is naive and he's dealing with America's issues. So I don't think he has time to actually verify the facts," said Kudakwashi Mgwari, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Edith Mutethya in Nairobi, Kenya contributed to this story.

XINHUA — AGENCIES

Xi urges China, France to fuel global growth

Two sides should make right strategic choice amid complex intl situation, says President

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has called on China and France to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, saying that the two independent major countries should be reliable forces for upholding the international order, open forces for promoting global growth, and progressive forces for guiding multilateral cooperation.

In a phone conversation on Thursday with French President Emmanuel Macron, Xi said that the more complex the international situation is, the more necessary it is for China and France to make the right strategic choice.

The phone call was the two leaders' third interaction within a year, following their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November and Xi's state visit to France in May last year.

In Paris, the two sides agreed to stay committed to the spirit that guided the establishment of their diplomatic ties, namely, independence, mutual understanding, long-term vision and mutual benefit, and enrich it with new features of the new era.

Xi told Macron that since then,

China-France cooperation has made many new advancements.

He called for the two sides to enhance strategic communication and build consensus, deepen cooperation in traditional areas such as investment, aerospace and nuclear energy, and expand collaboration in emerging fields like digital technology, green development, biomedicine and the silver economy.

China and France should further promote people-to-people exchanges to foster friendship between their peoples, Xi said.

France is China's third-largest trading partner within the European Union, and China is France's top trading partner in Asia and seventh-largest in the world. In 2024, bilateral trade stood at \$79.58 billion.

As this year marks the 80th anniversaries of the victory in World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations, Xi said that China and France, both permanent members of the UN Security Council and independent major countries, are founders and builders of the post-war international order, and he called for them to strengthen solidarity and cooperation.

See *Talks*, page 3

Fair business



Participants talk ahead of the opening ceremony of the 4th China-Central and Eastern European Countries Expo & International Consumer Goods Fair on Thursday in Ningbo, Zhejiang province. The fair, which runs through Sunday, is expected to attract over 3,000 overseas buyers. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY See story, page 10

Beijing remains consistent, firm despite impulsive levies

Shortly after China and the United States announced tariff adjustment measures in Geneva, Switzerland, Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist Aron Solomon argued in a Newsweek article that the US now has an administration that "governs not with strategy but with impulse".

The primary architect and advocate of the extraordinarily reckless White House tariff project — widely labeled a "tariff tantrum" by leading Western media outlets — is Peter Navarro, key adviser to US President Donald Trump and professor emeritus of the University of California, Irvine, according to The New York Times.

WORLD WATCH
By Richard Cullen

Navarro's distorting, paramount influence underpins and helps explain Solomon's conclusion that the entire saga, which has unfolded since the US administration's "Liberation Day" announcement on April 2, reveals "a total absence of strategic thinking".

By early May, however, Navarro's influence on the decision-making process was starkly waning.

See *Tariffs*, page 3

LACE HUB'S WORLDWIDE DOMINANCE UNTHREADS TANGLED US TARIFF POLICY

Zhejiang-made dress puts vibrant manufacturing base in spotlight

By CHEN YE in Wenzhou
chenye@chinadaily.com.cn

Editor's note: In a series of reports titled "Claims to Fame", China Daily looks at how some regions have earned wealth and recognition through specific products to advance economic development.

A White House press secretary's lace-trimmed red dress has unwittingly put the spotlight on a bustling small manufacturing hub in Zhejiang

in-depth

province, and deepened Washington's bluster in its unpopular tariff war.

On April 14, Zhang Zhisheng, Chinese consulate general in Denpasar, Indonesia, posted on social platform X about the dress Karoline Leavitt wore at a press briefing. "Criticizing 'Made in China' is work; enjoying 'Made in China' is life," he

said, noting Leavitt's dress was made in China.

Zhang reshared a comment from a netizen who said, "the lace on the neckline and front placket was woven in Yutang in Mabu town".

Behind this seemingly modest piece of lace lies the story of the transformation and upgrading of a labor-intensive industry in a small village in Pingyang county, Wenzhou.

Yutang village, located on the western edge of Mabu, lies in the southern part of Zhejiang, close to Fujian province, with the majority

of residents speaking Southern Min dialect.

Though geographically remote, Mabu is China's largest lace production base, accounting for 70 percent of the domestic market, and around 30 percent of the global market.

"Mabu's main industries include plastic weaving, knitted lace, and yarn," said Hu Mingzhe, director of the town's economic development office.

See *Lace*, page 2

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PAGE TWO



A worker sorts lace yarn at a factory in Mabu town, Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From page 1

"The lace and yarn sectors make up about 70 percent of the town's industrial economy. More than 30 percent of the town's enterprises above a designated size are lace producers. Of the 44 companies with annual business revenue exceeding 20 million yuan (\$2.77 million), 14 are in the lace industry, with a combined output value exceeding 3 billion yuan."

Spinning a yarn

The lace industry began in Yutang village and gradually expanded across Mabu town.

After China's reform and opening-up in 1978, several villagers who had worked elsewhere had discovered that lace production was a profitable business, said Huang Shenglin, Party secretary of Yutang.

They imported a few lace-making machines and started small home-based operations. Initially, the tight profit margins and limited product range failed to attract many villagers. But as the market grew and more lucrative lace styles became popular in places like Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Wenzhou, profits surged. One lace-making machine could produce up to 1,000 yuan worth of lace per day — drawing many to the industry. Production rapidly increased, and lace manufacturing flourished throughout the village in the 1980s.

"At night, when the machines started clattering in our quiet countryside, the nearby villages were all curious. Once they heard it was profitable, they scrambled to find equipment and sales channels. That's how it all grew," Huang said.

By the 1990s, the household workshops in Yutang began using the lace machines to produce yarn as well, selling it in Pingyang's market and tapping into a new segment. Turning yarn into lace requires additional materials such as metallic threads, sequins and beads.

Today, over 90 percent of the income of Yutang's 300-plus households is tied to lace and yarn. At its peak, Mabu — with a population of 44,000 — hosted more than 7,000 lace workshops.

"We can make any lace design in our workshops — even the kind on the dress worn by the White House press secretary," said Huang. "You just take the sample to a machinery factory and tell them what kind of product you want to make. They'll design a machine capable of producing it."

Huang's family owns 70 to 80 lace-making machines, capable of producing tens of thousands of meters of lace in a single day. However, most machines sit idle — not due to a lack of capacity, but because of insufficient order volume.

Hu explained that lace is a labor-intensive industry. Most products are exported via foreign trade companies, primarily to India and Malaysia, with little direct exports to the United States.

"Lace has low added value, low markup and low profit," he said. "In the overall apparel manufacturing process, lace is like MSG — it's a decorative seasoning. It's not easy to export directly, and the volume of direct exports is small."

Despite the hurdles, how does a piece of lace produced in Mabu make its way to the United States?

"After production, our lace is sold in wholesale fabric markets in Guangzhou and Yiwu, or through e-commerce platforms," said Chen Zhiren, the general manager of Wenzhou Huaweimei Lace & Ribbon Co, the town's largest lace enterprise.

"Domestic garment factories then purchase these materials based on orders from global brands, sew them onto garments, and export under license to markets like the US."

About 80 percent of lace in Yiwu's small commodity market in Zhejiang and Guangzhou's Zhongda Fabric Market originates from Mabu town.

"Half of our products are sold domestically, and the other half are exported — primarily to South America, where we account for 20 to 30 percent of the market," said Chen.

"Most exports are handled through trade firms, though we also do some direct exporting. For South America alone, we export 7 million to 8 million yuan worth each year, about 30 to 40 percent of our total output."

Founded in 2006, Huaweimei began in three residential units with a dozen machines and quickly reached 5 million yuan in output value in its first year — enough to be considered a sizable enterprise at the time. Today, it operates more than 200 lace machines and 700 to 800 yarn machines, producing over 100 million yuan in combined annual value at a 30,000-square-meter facility.

The showroom at Huaweimei displays over 800 types of lace, including a red dress trimmed with black lace, similar to the one worn by Leavitt. The lace wholesales for 13 yuan per meter, and the amount used in the dress Leavitt wore costs only a few yuan — but even that is considered "expensive" by industry standards.

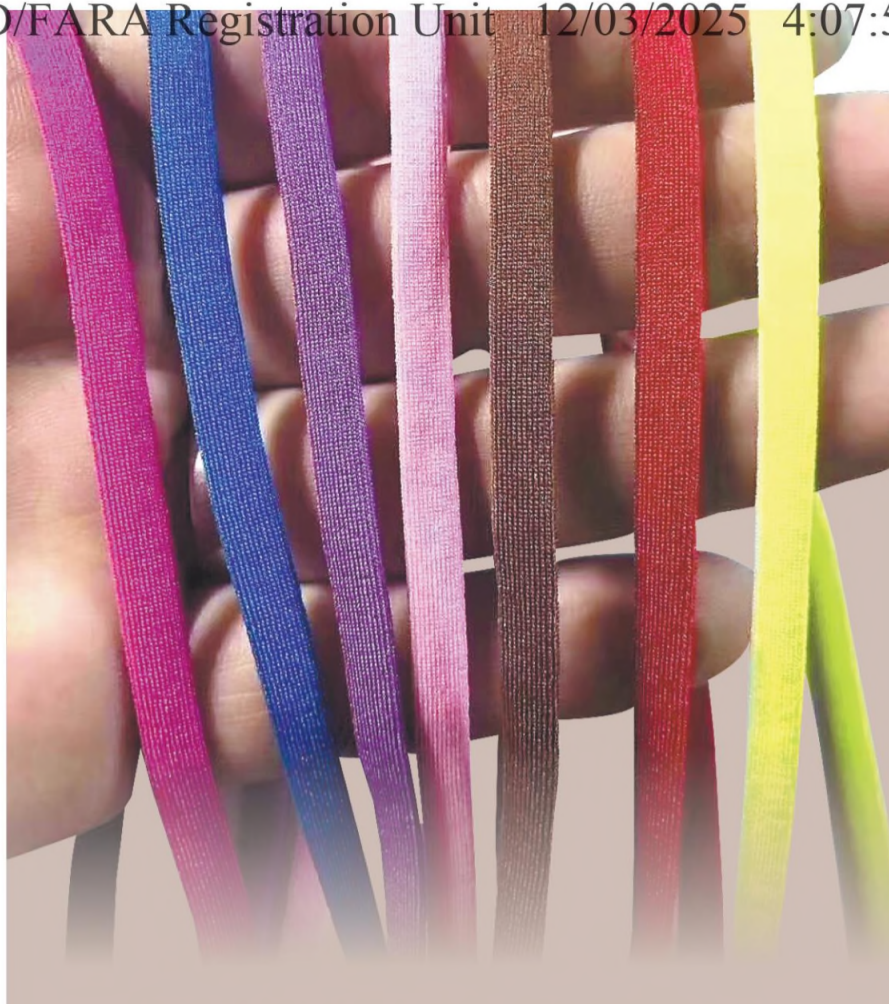
"Our raw materials — nylon, spandex, polypropylene, polyester and rayon — are all sourced externally. Our regular lace sells from a few cents to a few yuan per meter, with the highest around 3 to 4 yuan," Chen said.

Adapting to survive

Due to the uncertainty caused by the US tariffs and a cooling domestic garment market, low-margin operations are increasingly difficult to sustain.

Hu noted that some local companies are shifting to pet products like leashes and harnesses, since lace machines can be modified to produce other items.

"Nearby Shutou town is known for its leather



The lace ear loops for masks produced by Wenzhou Huaweimei Lace & Ribbon Co. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Lace: Stitching tiny threads for global influence



Left: A worker uses a modern yarn machine to produce lace at a factory in Mabu town. Right: The yarn produced by Huaweimei.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"We rely on having many machines, many styles, and serving the national market. No matter the order size, we take it to keep the industry running."

Huang Shenglin, Party secretary of Yutang village



A worker checks spools of yarn at a factory in Mabu. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

goods. We send raw materials there to make elastic straps, bring them back to Mabu for processing, and export them as pet accessories."

This isn't the first time lace-making machines have been repurposed. Chen recalled that during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, local companies adapted their machines to produce ear loops for masks — up to 500 metric tons a day, enough for 1 billion masks. Many companies joined the effort, and even today, buyers still source ear loops from Mabu.

Given market volatility and seasonality, some orders placed with Yutang manufacturers are small — only 500 meters, making profitability difficult. "We rely on having many machines, many styles, and serving the national market. No matter the order size, we take it to keep the industry running," Huang said.

Many lace traders in Guangzhou are Wenzhou natives. One unnamed entrepreneur from Yutang set up a factory in Guangzhou and helped others from the village sell their products there.

The key to selling lace in Guangzhou, Huang said, is speed: "Lace is a semi-finished product used in fashion sampling. We stock our designs in Guangzhou so when clients need something, it's ready to go. Orders placed today can ship tomorrow."

Wenzhou Senzhong Knitting Co is an example of this business philosophy. Over 20 years ago, it moved one of its factories from Wenzhou to Guangzhou. Only recently have those operations returned home to a new factory.

"Now we have counters in Guangzhou, Yiwu, Shaoxing, and Hangzhou, shipping products from the factory to those counters for export," said Lin Aimin, manager of its Guoxing Lace factory.

The Mabu factory has five floors and 200 lace-making machines, though only a few operate currently due to the off-season. Lin said business is quieter this year, and demand usually rises again after July when production of winter lines begins.

Quality counts

To weather the current market slowdown, Lin said the company must focus on quality. "If our products are good enough, we won't be eliminated. We're constantly improving based on market needs," Lin said.

Huaweimei has the same mindset, and multiple awards for technological innovation are on display in Chen's office. "Design innovation is our specialty," he said.

The company has created nearly 2,000 lace patterns, some patented, and built a digital archive of all samples over the past 20 years. "We keep evolving our patterns and materials. Our pattern designs aren't just generated by software — they're rooted in the craft and creativity of our town's master artisans," he said.

Photos of Chen with international buyers hang in the showroom. Mabu's lace has earned global recognition, and some foreign clients come directly to the town's factories.

One Brazilian customer has partnered with Huaweimei for two decades, across two generations. "This young man is the son of our longtime Brazilian partner who has now retired," Chen said proudly, pointing to their photo together.

Many foreign buyers praise the variety of patterns Huaweimei offers. The company fulfills the full supply chain from raw materials, to production, to sales. "If others want to replicate our lace production, it would take at least a decade to match our infrastructure," he said.

Chen served as president of the Pingyang Knitted Lace Industry Association for 11 years and is now its honorary president. "Even though we hold patents, we allow others to produce them. Lace is a livelihood industry," said Chen.

Many lace products require hand-assembled parts, and Chen's factory often outsources this work to local residents. Components are gathered from other villages, assembled, and turned into final products.

In August 2024, Pingyang county launched a plan to integrate and upgrade the lace industry, offering policy support for consolidation and development. This includes priority resource allocation, project subsidies, and rent discounts.

For example, companies with annual output of 20 million to 100 million yuan receive a 0.9 percent sales rebate; those with 100 million to 500 million yuan get 0.95 percent; and firms over 500 million yuan receive 1 percent. Equipment upgrades are also subsidized by up to 5 million yuan.

Previously, household lace workshops were not taxed due to low profits, said Chen Jing, the president of the local lace association, and larger companies provided materials for villagers to process at home.

Now, government-funded incubators with factory spaces and equipment let villagers work on-site and earn monthly salaries ranging between 6,000 and 10,000 yuan.

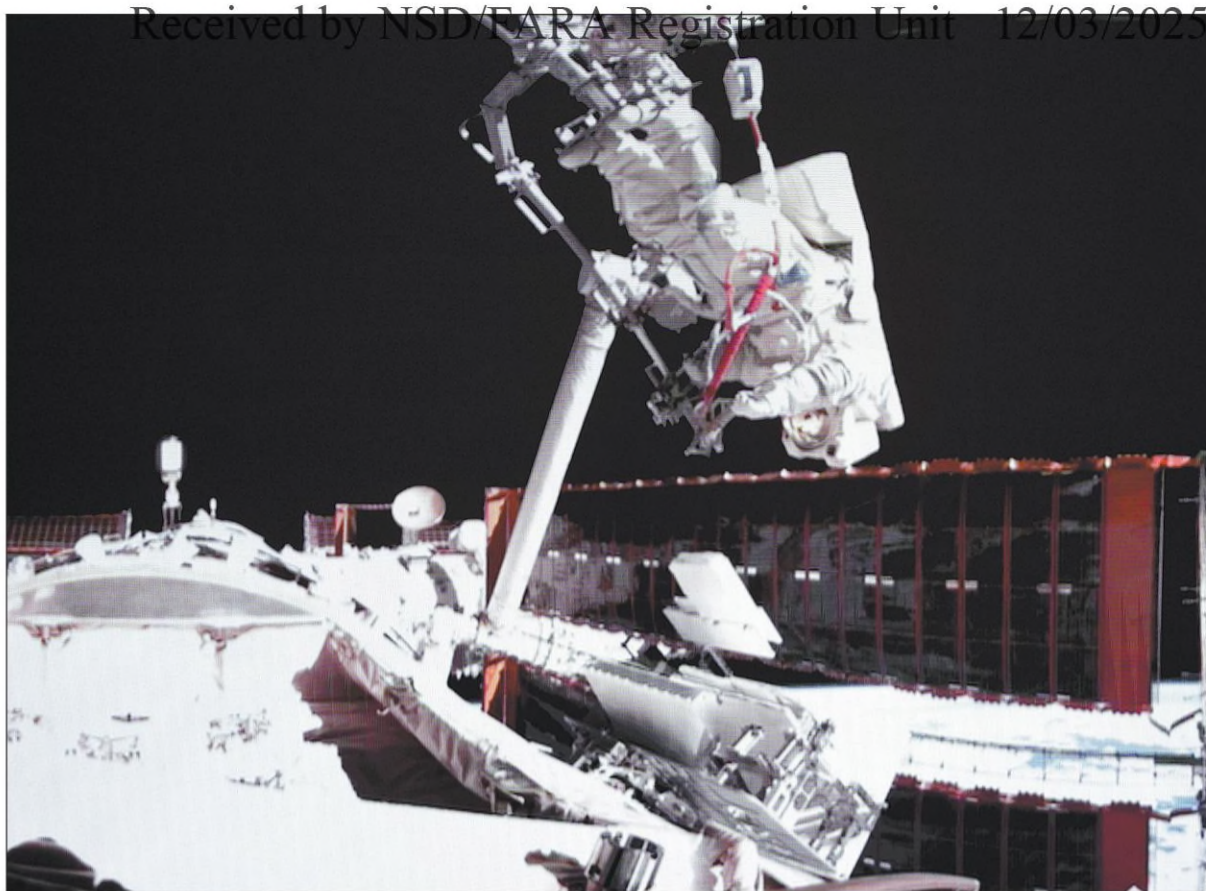
"Before, villagers had to buy their own equipment and worry about power and safety at home," Chen Jing said. "Now they just come in to work. The new machines are enclosed, and workers wear aprons and hats. Regular patrols ensure safety."

About 21 companies have transitioned from individual operations to join the incubator project over the past three to four years. The project, funded by Mabu's government, offers a "lease-then-own" model that is rent-free for three years if performance targets are met. After this initial period companies can purchase space at assessed market value.

Since 2024, Mabu has focused on upgrading its traditional industries, attracting quality projects, and pursuing clustered, digital, green, and high-quality development.

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TOP NEWS



A video screenshot taken at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center on Thursday shows Shenzhou XX crew member Chen Dong leaving China's orbiting space station for extravehicular activities. The crew members successfully installed a debris protection device at its designated location. They also inspected and carried out maintenance work on external equipment. LI YANCHEN / XINHUA

Biodiversity preservation success stories unveiled

By HOU LIQIANG
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

China has witnessed a steady increase in populations of rare and endangered wild flora and fauna, with over 200 animal species entering a stage of restorative growth.

The progress was revealed by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration on Thursday, this year's International Day for Biological Diversity, themed "Harmony with nature and sustainable development".

Over 100 endangered wild plant species have also been brought under emergency conservation measures, said the administration.

The achievement was made thanks to the country's continuous efforts to implement a nature reserve system centered on national parks and wildlife protection projects, it added.

Biological diversity in the Sanjiangyuan National Park, for instance, has maintained a continuous momentum to thrive, with the population of Tibetan antelopes rebounding from no more than 20,000 in the early 1980s to over 70,000 today.

The administration highlighted the surge in the number of wintering waterbirds in the country as another clear example of this progress.

Monitoring showed that 5.06 million waterbirds wintered in China last year, a historical high, it said.

Ma Keping, deputy director and secretary-general of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Biodiversity Committee, said that these achievements in China are primarily the result of effective conservation efforts.

"Enhanced protection measures have not only improved habitat quality but also led to an increase in their sizes," he said, adding that targeted species population recovery measures have also contributed to this progress.

According to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, it has implemented rescue conservation projects for 48 critically endangered wildlife species, encompassing field protection, rescue and rehabilitation, artificial breeding, and reintroduction into their natural habitats, all aimed at promoting the growth of their wild populations.

To further promote biodiversity conservation in China, Ma called for enhanced management of reserves by bringing agricultural areas within and around reserves under the oversight of relevant authorities.

Currently, such areas for agricultural purposes are not under reserve authorities' administration. It's common, however, for many animals, particularly birds, to leave protected areas for food, Ma said.

Elliot's pheasant, a bird under first-level State protection, for

The progress underscores Chinese scientists' unwavering dedication to conducting increasingly thorough research endeavors."

Ma Keping, deputy director and secretary-general of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Biodiversity Committee

instance, often seeks food in tea-oil camellia farms around its reserves, he said.

"They cannot live without such areas," Ma emphasized.

He stressed that empowering conservation authorities to manage such land is an "optimal strategy".

While keeping these farmlands intact, the reserve authorities could provide incentives for farmers to reduce and even eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

"This approach would lead to a mutually beneficial outcome for all involved," Ma said.

In its latest release, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration has pledged a strengthened effort to further promote biodiversity conservation in China.

With the aim of protecting key endangered species, the administration will undertake major biodiversity conservation projects to support the recovery of the wild populations of these species.

Additionally, as part of efforts to comprehensively enhance biodiversity conservation, the administration said it will intensify crackdown on illegal wildlife trade.

In another development on Thursday, the CAS' Biodiversity Committee announced significant progress by Chinese scientists in identifying new species throughout the country.

While identifying 132 new species of vertebrates and 309 new species of arachnids last year, Chinese scientists found 284 new plant species and also spotted another four plant species that had not been seen for many years.

They also reported 1,723 new species of fungi, accounting for 48.5 percent of the global total, according to a media release from the committee.

"The progress underscores Chinese scientists' unwavering dedication to conducting increasingly thorough research endeavors," Ma said.

Li Menghan contributed to this story.



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Astronauts carry out spacewalk

Shenzhou XX crew members completed vital tasks during 8-hour extravehicular mission

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The Shenzhou XX mission crew members aboard China's Tiangong space station completed their first spacewalk on Thursday afternoon, the China Manned Space Agency said.

During the eight-hour operation, mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong and crew member Colonel Chen Zhongrui floated out of the Tianhe core module to install a debris protection device at its designated location. The device

had been previously deployed outside through the cargo airlock and temporarily positioned by the robotic arm.

The pair also checked the condition of extravehicular instruments and fixed broken parts, according to the agency.

They returned to the space station at 4:49 pm. The third astronaut, Colonel Wang Jie, stayed inside the space station and worked with ground controllers to provide assistance to the spacewalkers.

The spacewalk was the 21st to be carried out by Chinese astronauts,

and marked the fourth time Chen Dong had worked outside the Chinese space station. He took part in three spacewalks during the Shenzhou XIV mission.

Thursday's spacewalk was the first for Chen Zhongrui.

Chen Dong and his teammates have been aboard the station since April 25.

Before the spacewalk, they conducted a host of assignments, including examining and performing maintenance on instruments, installing intravehicular devices, monitoring the space station environment and testing spacewalk suits. The astronauts also rehearsed medical emergency response efforts and engaged in scientific

and technological tasks.

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

Their predecessors in the Shenzhou XIX flight made three spacewalks during their six-month mission.

Orbiting Earth at a distance of about 400 kilometers, Tiangong has three permanent parts — a core module and two science capsules. It weighs about 100 metric tons and is expected to operate for at least 10 years as a national space-based platform for science and technology.

Tariffs: Levies weaken US dollar's reserve currency status

From page 1

As BBC reported, prior to the Geneva meeting, the US had already indicated — without any concession from China — how the US-China tariffs should be significantly cut, signaling that the White House was now urgently looking for a de-escalating deal.

In the end, the US and China swiftly agreed to ease trade tensions, each slashing sharply its escalated, post-April tariffs and pausing the rest for at least 90 days, resulting in hugely reduced tariff rates of 30 percent in the US and 10 percent in China.

"Rarely has an economic policy been repudiated as soundly, and as quickly, as President Trump's Liberation Day tariffs — and by Mr. Trump's own hand," said the Wall Street Journal.

So what prompted this dramatic reverse gear?

First, China's response was insistent, yet calm, each day following the US' April 2 announcement. Unlike other rattled nations, including long-term US allies, China showed zero interest in scrambling to engage in intimidating negotiations.

China's swift, measured and intense countermeasures comprehensively confirmed that it would not be bullied by the US.

Its approach dramatically set it apart from most of the other major Western powers startled by the US' tariff frenzy. The Global South — and the rest of the world — took note.

Next, mounting internal pressures in the US were sending alarming signals. Apart from the huge initial turmoil in the US stock and bond markets, it became impossible to ignore the raft of very sharp price increases and shortage problems steadily descending on US consumers because of the tariffs.

The White House's political marketing about "some pain presaging beautiful gains" was woefully ineffectual from the start, as the grim facts spoke for themselves.

The US' tariff project was basically shutting down its access to China's vital, unmatched value-for-money manufacturing prowess. Trading stock held in the US provided a short-term cushion, but shelves were already emptying and prices were soaring. For example, fundamental livelihood supplies for US babies, such as cribs and strollers, were gravely threatened.

Moreover, shipping across the Pacific was shrinking and US dock workers, truck drivers and logistics workers were sitting idle for extended periods and voicing their complaints.

May is also the month when US suppliers begin stocking up for the Christmas holiday — and that restocking, especially from China, was largely on hold. "Trump ruins Christmas" headlines were taking shape.

Rising prices risked the country's "Make America Great Again" slogan, and triggered the realization that all these "beautiful tariffs" actually comprise a colossal increase in the sales tax regime, ultimately designed to sustain massive income tax cuts for the richest of US citizens.

Geopolitically, the tariff turmoil unleashed by Washington helped boost the standing of "safe-hands" successful incumbents in recent elections in Australia, Canada and Singapore. At the same time, major international initial public offerings are migrating from New York to Hong Kong.

Unsurprisingly, the US administration's approval rating dropped across a range of national polls, as predictions from leading economists of higher inflation and a possible recession in the US intensified. Topping this off was the commentary highlighting how the tariff episode has further compromised the US dollar's role as the world's reserve currency.

Meanwhile, it was business as usual in China.

President Xi Jinping made an important Southeast Asia tour shortly after April 2. More recently, Beijing hosted a pivotal forum with the 33-member Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Two-thirds of Latin American countries have now joined the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

In his keynote speech at the Beijing meeting, Xi reiterated that "there are no winners in tariff wars and trade wars" and "bullying or hegemonism only leads to self-isolation".

China's formal response to the tariff mayhem has been robust and consistent and devoid of cocky speeches and strange "announcements about coming announcements", which were evident in the White House's approach.

"America's trade policy is being run like a weekend garage sale," said Solomon, the Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist, adding that "prices change by the hour, rules are made up on the fly — but unlike a garage sale, no one seems to know who is in charge".

The author is an adjunct professor in the faculty of law, Hong Kong University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Talks: Enhancing EU's strategic autonomy supported

From page 1

The two countries should jointly uphold the authority and standing of the UN, safeguard international trade rules and world economic order, and practice true multilateralism, Xi said.

He also said that China always views Europe as an independent pole in a multipolar world and supports

the EU in enhancing strategic autonomy and playing a more important role in international affairs.

China is ready to work hand in hand with Europe to address global challenges and achieve more outcomes that will not only benefit the two sides, but also the world at large, Xi said.

Macron said that despite changes in the international situation, his

country highly values its relationship with China and will unwaveringly adhere to the one-China principle.

France is willing to strengthen practical cooperation with China in trade, investment and various other fields, maintain the positive momentum of bilateral ties, and push for greater development of France-China relations, he said.

Macron also said that in the face of a rapidly changing international situation, France is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with China on major issues, fulfill the responsibilities of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, prevent the escalation and spillover of hot spot issues, and jointly maintain world and regional peace and stability.

Europe and China should further enhance communication and dialogue to safeguard their common interests, the French president added.

Over the past weeks, China and Europe have witnessed high-frequency interactions at various levels.

On May 6, Xi exchanged congratulations with European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen over the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and the EU.

Xi told the EU leaders that China is ready to work with them to expand mutual openness, properly handle friction and differences, and work toward an even brighter future for China-EU relations.

Observers said that the series of actions recently taken by the United States administration have had impacts on Europe's security, economy and other areas, thus prompting Europe to adjust its policy toward China in order to build a more stable relationship that benefits both sides.



Four golden snub-nosed monkeys look at their caretaker Xu Tingyou, who is a patroller at a natural education base in Pingwu county, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. This base is home to more than 40 golden snub-nosed monkeys, an endangered species unique to China. JIANG HONGJING / XINHUA

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CHINA

Free care received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/03/2025 4:07:57 PM

Medical experts offer free clinic services in Chongqing on Thursday. Organized by the National Health Commission, the event featured 20 medical experts offering services to locals for free across over 20 specialties, including internal medicine and pediatrics.

ZHAO JUNCHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



Pump storage expertise reaches global parity

By HOU LIQIANG in Chengdu
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite entering the pumped storage development arena relatively late, China has become a global leader in the sector through more than half a century of dedicated efforts, experts said.

The industry is expected to continue thriving in the country and play an increasingly vital role in driving its energy transition, they emphasized.

Experts also called for mutual recognition of Chinese and international standards in the sector, so that China's extensive expertise can better support global climate goals.

Pumped storage stations work by using surplus green electricity during off-peak consumption periods to pump water to higher elevation reservoirs. The stored water is then released to generate power when demand surges. It remains the most cost-effective method of large-scale energy storage.

At a recent event on pumped storage in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, Zhang Zongliang, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering, described pumped storage as the most mature energy storage technology with the longest life span.

He said it offers an effective solution to the intermittency, volatility and decentralization of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power.

China built its first pumped storage power station in 1968 — almost 90 years after the world's first facility was built in Zurich, Switzerland.

However, by the end of 2020, China had risen to the top globally in both operating and under-construction capacity. The sector has grown further since the implementation of the Medium- and Long-Term Development Plan for Pumped Storage in 2021.

By the end of last year, China's total pumped storage capacity reached 58.69 gigawatts, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the global total, with capacity under construction at about 200 GW.

China has also built a comprehensive industrial system and a specialized development model encompassing standard formulation, planning and design, engineering and construction, and equipment manufacturing.

Innovations such as intelligent pumped storage planning technologies have helped make facility lay-

out more scientific and efficient. Tan Hua, chairman of China Gezhouba Group Corporation, offered an ambitious vision for the sector's future.

By the end of this decade, China's total operational capacity is expected to reach 120 GW — more than double the projected figure for 2025.

By 2035, a modern pumped storage industry will be fully established to meet the needs of large-scale renewable energy development, he said.

He noted significant growth potential, especially as integrated hydro, wind, solar and storage facilities continue to expand.

"This will enhance the role of pumped storage stations in the development of hydropower bases and new energy projects in desert and wasteland regions," Tan said.

He also highlighted the opportunity for small and medium-sized pumped storage stations on city outskirts and in areas rich in renewable energy.

"They stand to benefit from a new wave of major development opportunities," he said.

Zhu Guojin, chair of the board of Beijing Engineering Corporation, a company under the Power Construction Corporation of China, said China is well-positioned to help accelerate the global energy transition through its expertise in pumped storage.

He said that officials and executives from countries such as Indonesia, Kazakhstan and the Philippines have shown strong interest in working with China to advance their own pumped storage capabilities.

Citing International Energy Agency data, Zhu said technologies like pumped storage could meet 35 percent of global grid regulation demand by 2025, with demand expected to increase several dozen times its current level by 2050.

However, exporting China's technology and equipment remains a challenge, largely due to the lack of international recognition of Chinese standards.

"The issue of mutual recognition between China's pumped storage standards and those of other regions is crucial for the sector's international expansion," Zhu said.

He stressed that China does not seek to replace foreign standards with its own. "Rather, we hope to establish a system for mutual recognition of standards," he said.

Initiative launched to restore and safeguard rivers, lakes

Integrated plan marks new beginning in water governance policies and goals

By XUNUO

xunuo@chinadaily.com.cn

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment on Wednesday unveiled an action plan to protect and restore rivers and lakes across the country, laying out steps to improve water ecology and quality from 2025 to 2027.

Officials said the plan marks a new phase in China's water governance, moving beyond pollution control toward a more integrated approach.

"It is a milestone, following the 2015 Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution," said Liu Jing, deputy director of the ministry's Department of Water Ecology and Environment. "This plan integrates the management of water resources, water environment and water ecology."

Gao Hongjie, director of the Institute of Water Ecology and Environment at the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, said the initiative signals that China's water governance is entering a phase focused on quality and efficiency.

Under the plan, a "beautiful" river or lake is defined as one with sustained ecological flow, intact or restored ecological functions in surrounding buffer zones, effectively protected biodiversity, controlled pollutant discharges and water quality that is fundamentally improved or maintained at excellent levels. It also envisions spaces that meet public expectations for scenic and recreational use.

To restore aquatic ecosystems, the plan calls for measures such as protecting aquatic life, curbing eutrophication in lakes and reser-

voirs, restoring habitats, and improving flood control and drainage systems.

Surveys will be conducted on water ecology in 2,573 rivers and lakes already identified by authorities. The plan emphasizes protection of water substrates and surrounding environments and encourages scientific adjustment of biological communities to improve ecological diversity, stability and sustainability.

Key habitats will be protected through the construction of fish passages, habitat connectivity improvements and restoration of spawning grounds. These efforts aim to support fish and waterbird populations during critical life stages such as reproduction and growth.

By 2027, the integrity of aquatic life in the Yangtze River Basin is expected to improve, and the decline of aquatic biodiversity in the Yellow River Basin should begin to stabilize, according to the plan.

As part of its broader "Beautiful China" vision, the country has already made significant strides in improving water quality. Last year, the proportion of surface-water sections classified as having excellent water quality reached 90.4 percent — the first time that figure has exceeded 90 percent.

The main stream of the Yangtze River, China's longest waterway, has maintained Grade II status — the second-highest level in the country's five-tier system — for five consecutive years. The Yellow River, the country's second-longest, has done so for three years.

The plan was jointly issued by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance and other ministries. It sets a goal of completing 40 percent of the "beautiful rivers and lakes" initiative by 2027, achieving significant progress by 2030 and full completion by 2035.

Offshore carbon utilization project put into operation

SHENZHEN — China's first offshore carbon capture, utilization and storage project on Thursday began operations in the Pearl River Mouth Basin in South China, according to the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, the country's largest offshore oil and gas producer.

Situated at the Enping 15-1 platform, the CCUS project captures carbon dioxide produced during oil development, purifies and pressurizes it to a supercritical state, and injects it into underground oil reservoirs at an initial rate of 8 metric tons per hour. This innovative approach both drives increased oil production and achieves carbon sequestration, creating a new model of marine energy recycling.

The Enping 15-1 platform, currently Asia's largest offshore oil production platform, is located approximately 200 kilometers southwest of Shenzhen, Guangdong

province, at a water depth of about 90 meters. At peak production, the oilfield group produces over 7,500 tons of crude oil daily.

The oilfield contains high levels of carbon dioxide, which would traditionally be extracted with the oil, leading to the corrosion of offshore platform facilities and submarine pipelines while also increasing carbon emissions.

CCUS represents an emerging technological approach for low-carbon and efficient development of fossil energy. Globally, there are 65 commercial CCUS projects, though most are concentrated onshore with very few offshore implementations.

The successful implementation of China's project represents a comprehensive upgrade of the nation's offshore CCUS equipment technology across the entire chain, said Wan Nianhui, general manager of CNOOC's Enping oilfield operation area.

"Over the next decade, we will inject more than 1 million tons of carbon dioxide on a large scale and drive an increase in crude oil production of 200,000 tons, which is significant for ensuring national energy security and advancing toward carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals."

According to CNOOC, with further equipment upgrades, the project's carbon dioxide injection will increase to 17 tons per hour, and the peak single-well oil production increase will reach 15,000 tons annually, enhancing both production capacity and carbon reduction capabilities.

The Enping 15-1 oilfield carbon dioxide storage demonstration project, launched by CNOOC in June 2023, has already injected nearly 200,000 tons of carbon dioxide, providing a viable, rapid carbon reduction solution for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao

Greater Bay Area and the entire country.

Regarding its climate change response, China made a commitment in 2020 to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, meaning that China will cut carbon emission intensity more than any other country in the world and move from carbon peak to carbon neutrality in the shortest span in history, according to a Xinhua think tank report released earlier this year.

China has established the world's largest carbon market. The nation's installed capacity for hydropower, wind power, solar power and biomass power generation is the highest in the world, and its production of new energy vehicles has topped the world for 10 consecutive years, the report stated.

XINHUA

Virtual interaction



Visitors wearing mixed-reality headsets interact with a Tyrannosaurus rex model at a square on Nanjing Road in Shanghai on Wednesday. YANG JIANZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Innovations help reduce dairy production costs

By ZHAO YIMENG

zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

Scientific breakthroughs in China's dairy industry are improving raw milk consumption and lowering production costs, helping livestock farmers cope with falling milk prices while advancing sustainable development, experts said at a recent symposium in Beijing.

Liu Yaqing, secretary-general of the Dairy Association of China, said the global dairy industry faces both historic opportunities and mounting challenges, including tighter resource constraints, environmental pressures and increasing market volatility.

"In China, persistent low milk prices and declining farming profitability are straining the sector, which

is further hindered by imbalanced supply and demand, weak coordination between farming and processing, and insufficient consumer market development," Liu said.

To achieve high-quality and sustainable growth, Liu called for driving innovation in dairy science and technology, with breakthroughs in breeding, intelligent farming and advanced processing.

"We should build a comprehensive traceability system from farm to table and enforce strict standards to ensure the safety and nutrition of every drop of milk," she said.

Wang Jiaqi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences' Institute of Animal Science, and chief scientist for milk quality and safety, highlighted the

progress of the Excellent Milk Project, launched in 2013. The initiative has improved the nutritional value, safety standards and overall quality of domestically produced milk through advanced processing and stricter quality control.

The project also led to the development of China's first technical system for classifying raw milk by use, Wang said.

"It addresses the long-standing issue of mixing milk of different quality levels, which previously wasted high-quality milk and hindered fair pricing," he said.

Wang said 76 new standards now support seamless integration from premium farms to high-quality milk products. Despite low nationwide milk prices, demonstration enter-

prises such as Bright Dairy and Food have paid a premium of 0.15 yuan per kilogram for high-quality raw milk. This has increased annual income by 864 yuan (\$119.70) per cow and helped rebalance profits between farmers and processors.

The project has also introduced green, low-carbon processing technologies. For instance, it reduced pasteurization temperatures from the traditional 105 C to 75 C, cutting processing costs by more than 15 percent, saving 48.55 yuan per ton of milk and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 46.51 kg per ton, according to Wang.

Due to the impact of imports, China's milk self-sufficiency rate dropped for 10 consecutive years, falling from 94.1 percent in 2008 to

63.3 percent, posing a challenge to national milk security.

In recent years, the project pioneered a milk quality evaluation system based on active enzymes, active proteins and furosine. It established 27 standards and found that domestic milk, compared with imports, suffers less from quality degradation due to heat damage and long-distance transportation.

"High-quality milk comes from local sources, helping Chinese producers compete more effectively with imports and restore consumer confidence," Wang said.

The certification system has been approved for packaging by leading companies such as Junlebao Dairy Group and Haihe Dairy, and is now used by 79 companies across 29 provinces.

The lactoferrin content of domestic pasteurized milk has risen from 10.4 milligrams per liter in 2017 to 43 milli-

grams per liter in 2024 — eight times higher than that of imported milk.

More than 97 percent of China's pasteurized milk now meets high-quality standards, raising the country's milk self-sufficiency rate to more than 70 percent, Wang said.

Meanwhile, to reduce farming costs, researchers are optimizing forage structure and improving feed efficiency. With China heavily reliant on soybean imports, soybean meal substitution has become a national priority for food security. For cattle and sheep, urea is a key alternative protein source, but its rapid breakdown in the rumen has limited its effectiveness.

To address this, CAAS developed a green and efficient urease inhibitor from red clover extract. Tests showed the extract reduced rumen ammonia release by 37 percent, increased feed conversion by 10 percent and boosted milk production by 9 percent.

CHINA

Exotic pet vet relishes talk with animals

Extensive research enables specialist veterinarian to treat unusual species

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

Over the past three years, veterinarian Zhang Xinxin has treated over 5,000 exotic pets, a vast increase from years prior when he would mainly treat cats and dogs.

Such exotic pets include rabbits, turtles, snakes, parrots, lizards, hamsters and chinchillas.

According to the 2025 China Pet Industry White Paper recently released by industry platform PetData, owners of fish accounted for 13.4 percent of all pet owners nationwide last year, an increase of 0.6 percentage points year-on-year, while owners of reptiles accounted for 11.3 percent, rising 2.9 percentage points.

The number of people with pet rodents and birds accounted for 7.8 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively, increasing by 0.7 percentage points each.

The growing exotic pet market has driven demand for vets with special skills, including 27-year-old Zhang, who works at Aiwei Pet Clinic in Changchun, Jilin province.

Zhang became a vet at the clinic after graduating from Jilin Agricultural University in 2019.

At the beginning, his patients were mostly cats and dogs, he said. "However, at the end of 2019 a mother brought her daughter to our clinic. The little girl was crying because her pet rabbit was sick."

"Although the rabbit wasn't expensive to buy, they were willing to spend hundreds of yuan on its treatment," Zhang said.

The rabbit's breathing was weak, and after examination he diagnosed it with gastrointestinal disease.

"Unfortunately, the pet's condition was too severe for us to save its life," he said.

"I will never forget the sad expres-



Zhang Xinxin, a veterinarian in Changchun, Jilin province.

sion on the little girl's face. It turns out that not only cats and dogs can be family companions."

After that, Zhang began to study the treatment of exotic pets.

"Few vets could treat the diseases of exotic pets at that time in our city, so I hoped I could help more pet owners cure their exotic pets," he said.

However, Zhang found that curing exotic pets was completely different from treating dogs and cats. "During my four years in college, I gained little knowledge about exotic pets and there were very few related books," he said.

In order to better treat these animals, Zhang searched for books through various channels, looked for information and videos online, and often went to other cities for further study.

"From 2020, every year I would spend about two months visiting pet clinics across the country, such as those in Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing in Jiangsu province," he said. "I would learn theoretical knowledge from experienced vets while also gaining practical experience."

Two years later, Zhang had accumulated enough experience to start specializing in exotic pets.

One day in July 2022, a pet owner brought his rabbit to the clinic.

The rabbit couldn't move due to abdominal pain at the time, Zhang said. He took an X-ray of the bunny and asked the owner feeding-related questions. After examination, he found that the issue was caused by



Zhang Xinxin treats a guinea pig at Aiwei Pet Clinic in Changchun. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

digestive obstruction due to improper feeding.

Zhang prescribed oral medication, and two days later, the owner told Zhang that the rabbit had recovered.

Nowadays, young people are generally busy with work, he said. Compared to cats and dogs, exotic pets often don't require a lot of time for taking walks. They are quieter and less demanding.

"For instance, young women like to keep fluffy and cute pets, which can bring high emotional value to them," he said. As a result, among

the small mammals, rabbits are the most common.

"Many people consider that vets specializing in exotic pets only deal with animals, but in fact, we also need more communication with their owners," he said.

"Many diseases of exotic pets are not obvious and it is crucial for the owners to describe their daily lives with them."

Additionally, whether the exotic pet owner can establish trust with the vet is also one of the key factors in curing pets' diseases, he added.

At the end of 2023, Zhang estab-

lished a dedicated exotic pet inpatient department at the clinic.

"Many exotic pets have high environmental requirements during treatment, such as temperature, humidity and level of quietness," Zhang said. "Therefore, we need to establish different wards for different exotic pets to ensure treatment effectiveness."

Han Junhong contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn

Friendship hospital brings expertise to Africa

CONAKRY, Guinea — Morning light streams through the windows of the newly opened medical complex at the Sino-Guinean Friendship Hospital in Conakry. Radiologist Liu Peng and her Guinean colleague Amelie Lamah examine spinal scans on a 1.5-Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging machine, seamlessly switching between French and Chinese as they work.

This moment of teamwork captures the daily rhythm at one of Guinea's largest public hospitals, and a flagship Chinese aid project. Since 1963, China has sent over 25,000 medical team members to 48 African countries, treating more than 230 million patients and winning the hearts of the African people with dedication.

They have been working to fight Ebola outbreaks, improve medical procedures and train generations of local professionals, shifting the focus from short-term aid to sustainable empowerment.

In March 2025, the 31st Chinese medical team arrived at the hospital, comprising 24 specialists from Beijing Friendship Hospital, the Beijing Municipal Health Commission and the Beijing Center for Disease Prevention and Control. More than half hold senior titles or doctorates. Beyond traditional expertise, they brought technologies such as orthopedic artificial intelligence planners and surgical robots.

"The AI system enables precise joint replacement modeling," said team leader Wang Bin, adding that although Guinea's intermittent power supply poses a challenge, the team is developing joint protocols with local staff to ensure stable application and long-term adaptability.

Hands-on knowledge transfer continues across departments: Guinean surgeons hone their joint replacement skills under Chinese guidance, and traditional medicine experts explore acupuncture treatments.

Cooperation of this kind has grown through decades of engagement. Since 1968, Chinese doctors have trained thousands of African medical professionals through hands-on clinical mentoring and exchange programs.

Lamah, director of the hospital's radiology department, said their "diagnostic capabilities keep improving through this partnership."

The hospital's August 2023 expansion marked a major milestone, doubling clinical capacity through new Chinese-built facilities that now serve dual purposes: elevating patient care standards while creating advanced training opportunities for medical professionals. "Better infrastructure benefits both patients and medical advancement," said Mohamed Diane, director general of the Sino-Guinean Friendship Hospital.

Wang reflected on the long-running partnership: "For 57 years, every Beijing medical team has shared one goal — making technology take root here."

XINHUA

Innovative planter provides smart solution to indoor gardening

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

An innovative indoor planting system developed by a company based in Chengdu, Sichuan province, is reshaping indoor gardening, enabling apartment dwellers to cultivate their own fresh produce at home with minimal effort.

The smart planting pod by Sichuan Zongtang Technology employs soilless cultivation technology and artificial intelligence to automatically manage plants' water, light, nutrient supply and overall growth conditions.

The system retails for around 3,200 yuan (\$443).

Early adopter Liu Shahe, who shared her experience on social media platform Xiaohongshu, praised the smart device for fulfilling her dream of home gardening despite her frequent business trips.

"It's both stylish and functional, and incredibly easy to use," she said, hailing the compact indoor garden as her favorite home appliance.

Using the device, Liu has success-



The indoor planting system is displayed at a showroom of Sichuan Zongtang Technology in Chengdu, Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

fully grown a variety of crops including sunflowers, kale, purple-leaf lettuce and tomatoes. "I even made hotpot with vegetables I grew myself — it was super delicious," she added.

Luo Dan, cofounder and chief marketing officer of the company, said the 1.5-meter-tall pod consists of a vertical planting zone, light col-

umn and water tank, which work together to provide plants with simulated sunlight, irrigation and nutrients.

Despite occupying just 0.25 square meters of floor space, the device can simultaneously grow up to 30 different kinds of plants — including vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers — in its bamboo-shaped

planting zone, according to Luo.

The light column is equipped with full-spectrum light-emitting diode lights that automatically simulate sunlight, she said. This ensures healthy growth of the plants even without natural light while consuming only 1.5 kilowatt-hours of electricity per day.

"The smart planting pod makes the growing process extremely simple," Luo said. "All you need to do is insert seedling cubes into the pod, set the lighting parameters, and let the system handle the rest."

She compared the new planting pod to traditional farming methods, saying its hydroponic vertical farming solution increases annual yield by over twentyfold while reducing pests and diseases and eliminating pesticide residues.

To date, 200 of the pods have been sold, with sales extending to international markets including Vietnam and Malaysia, Luo said.

The company said it is collaborating with lifestyle, food and gardening influencers for product testing in multiple scenarios. Meanwhile, it

is also collecting user feedback for further improvements.

It plans to launch its second product line this year — a plant-based robotic pet designed for desktop use, featuring an affordable price point and light design.

Industry experts pointed out that urban residents living in steel-and-concrete jungles crave closer ties to nature and high-quality fresh produce, while smart technologies like the internet of things and AI are transforming indoor gardening into a trendy urban lifestyle by eliminating traditional gardening barriers for beginners.

A recent report by global market research company Technavio revealed that the global market for smart indoor gardens is experiencing significant growth as demand continues to rise for locally grown, fresh produce and sustainable farming practices.

It forecasts that the market for smart indoor garden systems will increase by \$1.33 billion at a compound annual growth rate of 9.4 percent between 2024 and 2029.

Monitoring stations improve capability to study volcanic activity

CHANGCHUN — Ascending the Changbai Mountains in Northeast China, the fresh green of early spring slowly gives way to lingering snow. On a slope stands a three-story building — the largest volcanic monitoring station in the country.

Located in Jilin province, the Changbai Mountains are well known for the mysterious Tianchi crater lake, yet few know that they were the site of one of the most powerful volcanic eruptions in recorded history. In 946, an eruption dispersed ash more than 10,000 kilometers away, reaching as far as Greenland.

To strengthen China's capacity to study and predict volcanic activity, the station was established in the mid-1990s by the China Earthquake Administration and the Jilin provincial government.

Over the past two decades, it has evolved into China's most comprehensive volcano monitoring facility. The station operates 15 monitoring points across the northern, western and southern slopes of the mountains, and its research team has expanded from three people to 10.

Kong Qingjun, head of the station, remembers the challenges in

the early days, when there was no optical fiber communication.

"Most of the data had to be stored on hard disks and retrieved manually every 10 days," he said. "Once, my colleague and I got lost in heavy fog while trying to replace the hard disks."

Thanks to infrastructure improvements in recent years, many field stations now have optical fiber and Wi-Fi connections, which greatly enhance real-time data transmission, Kong said.

But challenges remain. "Continuous data collection is crucial," he said. "Yet the harsh con-

ditions — strong winds, heavy snow and lightning — demand constant vigilance from our technicians."

Globally, volcano research has a much longer history. The world's first observatory was founded in 1841 at Italy's Mount Vesuvius, followed by the first modern observatory at Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano in the United States around 70 years later.

By comparison, China lags behind some developed countries in volcanic monitoring, facing challenges such as limited historical data, a shortage of advanced equipment and insufficient monitoring tech-

nologies. "Volcanic eruptions are rare and occur over long cycles, so we place great importance on collaborating with scientific institutions both domestically and internationally," said Liu Guoming, the station's chief engineer, noting that researchers from the station have visited volcano observatories in countries such as Italy and the United States, sometimes even witnessing eruptions firsthand.

With its growing academic reputation, the station has built long-term partnerships with volcano experts and institutions in countries such as the United States, Japan, Italy and

Russia. Moreover, China's continued investment in the field has brought in new technologies, such as satellite remote sensing and drone-mounted instruments.

According to Kong, the station is working with the Jilin Earthquake Agency to upgrade its early warning system. "We're building an artificial intelligence-powered platform to improve our ability to detect and issue warnings for potential volcanic activity," he said.

"After over 20 years of continuous monitoring, we are gradually uncovering the secrets of the Changbai Mountains," he said. "Our goal is to grow into a world-class volcanic monitoring station."

XINHUA

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CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY



Left: Workers introduce the Sanjin Green Living mini program in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, in March. More than 7 million people have used the program to document their carbon emission reduction behaviors. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY **Right:** A "green station" transformed from a gas station draws visitors in Wuhan, Hubei province, in December. The city's landscape architecture institute revamped the site to boost residents' low-carbon awareness. SONG ZHENTAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



Residents rewarded for saving electricity

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

State Grid Hubei Electric Power Co is tapping the potential of a WeChat mini program to encourage the public to reduce electricity consumption during peak hours in Central China's Hubei province, using gamification to ease the strain on the grid and promote carbon emission reduction.

The program, Huijiedian, originated as a rural pilot in 2022 in Xiangyang, Hubei, before scaling province-wide a year later. It aims to bring down residents' electricity consumption during peak hours in summer and winter, according to Tong Xuan, director of marketing at the company's sales department.

Driven by air conditioning and heating, the surges in electricity demand during the two seasons have long strained Hubei's grid, he noted.

"Such short-term spikes in electricity consumption have placed immense pressure on the stable operation of the power grid. They can even lead to insufficient power supply and outages," Tong said.

The mini program, accessible via WeChat without installation, incentivizes users to adjust consumption patterns so as to alleviate the pressure on the power grid.

It calculates energy savings by assigning equal importance to reductions during peak periods in comparison to pre-peak usage and the average consumption over the previous two days. By combining immediate behavioral adjustments with historical consumption patterns, it determines the total savings accomplished.

Residents can participate in the initiative by reducing their electricity usage between 8 pm and 10 pm. For every kilowatt-hour of electricity saved, they will contribute to a reduction of 525 grams of carbon dioxide emissions. Upon achieving a reduction of 2,000 grams of emissions, residents can purchase hot-and-dry noodles — a popular local breakfast delicacy — at half price.

Users can also convert their saved electricity into points, which can be used to offset electricity bills or purchase products on the e-commerce platform of the State Grid. The points awarded for each kilowatt-hour of electricity saved range from 50 to 500, depending on the grid stress level at the time of energy conservation.

To date, 458,600 people have registered with the mini program, with 42,000 of them active daily users, according to State Grid Hubei Electric Power Co.

Hu underscored the program's role in advancing carbon emission reduction among individuals, who account for 40 to 70 percent of global emissions. By gamifying carbon accounting — converting saved kilowatts into redeemable reward points — the initiative bridges the gap between high-level carbon reduction policies and grassroots action, he explained.

"The program transforms individuals into active participants and beneficiaries of China's carbon neutrality journey," he added.

To date, the program has curtailed peak-hour grid demand by more than 166,000 kWh, cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 8.7 metric tons.

"The mini program may become one of the core tools for citizens to fulfill their climate responsibilities in the future," he said.

Hu's vision has garnered support from Xiao Hongying, 60, a resident of the Donghu Xincheng residential community in Wuhan. Her family adopted the mini program at the end of last year, prompted by recommendations from their community grid manager.

"My husband is now the main user in my home. He used to leave lights on when leaving the room, but has since developed the habit of conserving electricity," said Xiao.

"I will recommend the mini program to people around here, considering that it can help save electricity and enhance awareness in this regard," she said.

Contact the writers at houliaqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Low-carbon lifestyles gain extra credit

Mini programs incentivize public to go green in their everyday actions

By ZHOU LIHUA in Wuhan, ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

The low-carbon lifestyle is a daily norm for Wei Ying, a resident in the Hubei provincial capital of Wuhan. The 36-year-old, however, was surprised when her environmentally friendly actions, such as riding shared bikes instead of getting taxis and recycling her trash, contributed to a reduction in a bank loan.

On April 28, she offset 90 yuan (\$12) from her monthly mortgage payment with 45,000 grams of carbon credits, making her, an employee of a State-owned company, the first resident in Wuhan to do so.

She earned the credits via Wutanjianghu, a mini program within WeChat launched in June 2023 by Wuhan Carbon Inclusion Management Co under the guidance of the Wuhan Ecology and Environment Bureau, which aims to incentivize Wuhan residents to lead low-carbon lifestyles.

As China moves ahead with its climate targets of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, the mini program provides a microcosm for how local authorities are moving to encourage the general public to help reach these goals.

Research by the Chinese Academy of Sciences shows that residential consumption accounts for 53 percent of China's total carbon dioxide emissions.

Wei started to use the mini program soon after it was launched at a celebration event held by Wuhan authorities for World Environment Day, which falls on June 5 every year, in 2023.

"I already led a low-carbon and environmentally friendly lifestyle then," she said. "But the mini program makes me feel that my actions have tangible value, as it records and quantifies my low-carbon activities."

The mini program incentivizes people to do more low-carbon things, such as switching off lights when leaving an empty room or using public transport, by tracking these activities within the phone, connecting with other apps and sharing data, and then giving points or carbon credits for these actions. Once enough points are collected within the program, they can then be cashed in for various prizes or products, and can even be used to lower bills.

A rising number of similar carbon credit mini programs have started to appear in China in recent years in cities such as Beijing and provinces such as Sichuan.

Thanks to the incentives provided by the Wuhan mini program, people like Wei feel even more motivated to take a low-carbon path.

Wei has exchanged credits accumulated in the mini program for wine and fluffy toys. Other rewards included discounts on hot-and-dry noodles, a popular local delicacy, or a chance to enter the lottery to take part in a marathon.

More recently, the Wutanjianghu mini program teamed up with the



Residents participate in a game promoting low-carbon awareness in Wuhan on July 12, 2023, which was National Low Carbon Day that year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Shared bicycles are parked on a street in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



A smart recycling machine is used to help boost low-carbon awareness in Wuhan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wuhan branch of China Minsheng Bank on March 1 for a loan offsetting initiative, whereby users can use their points to reduce a loan's interest by as much as 2,000 yuan per year.

"This is very attractive to me. The credits I make every month from practicing low-carbon actions are enough to offset more than 100 yuan. It's possible that I can accumulate enough credits to offset the maximum amount of interest this year," Wei said.

Wang Qinxin, a 53-year-old retiree, has accumulated 220,000

grams of carbon credits on the platform since 2023.

"I use the mini program now almost every day, with shared bikes my most frequent low-carbon practice," Wang said.

Every time a user takes a public bus, the mini program will award them 21.25 grams of carbon credits. Each kilometer traveled by subway earns 78.4 grams of carbon credits, and each kilometer by shared bike earns 93.3 grams. Once 5,000 grams are accumulated, users can trade them in for half a dozen eggs.

According to Liu Shu, chairman

of Wuhan Carbon Inclusion Management Co, the mini program has 1.6 million users. That number soared by 100,000 in the days following the introduction of the loan interest offsetting initiative, he said.

Emission reductions recorded on the mini program have gone beyond 30,000 metric tons, he added.

A total of seven low-carbon activities have been incorporated into the mini program so far, including commuting via public bus and subway, riding shared bikes, choosing electric vehicles on car-hailing platforms and refusing disposable plastic bags, Liu said.

Despite the difficulty of developing tailored, rigorous methodologies for calculating emissions in new settings, further activities will be added, the chairman said.

Shanxi success

A similar mini program named Sanjin Green Living, launched in September 2022 and encompassing the entire population of Shanxi province with almost 34.5 million people, has also been a success.

Since going live, the Shanxi mini program has engaged over 7.3 million users, and their low-carbon activities have collectively led to a reduction of roughly 240,700 metric tons in carbon dioxide emissions, according to Shanxi Green Trading Center Co, the operator of the mini program.

Launched in 2012 by Shanxi provincial authorities, the center is tasked with overseeing carbon trading in the province.

Liu Zelong, director of the center, said there was a lot of preparation for carbon trading in Shanxi before the national carbon trading platform came into effect in July 2021, including drafting trading rules, as well as conducting carbon footprint verification and carbon accounting.

"Our involvement in these initiatives significantly deepened our understanding of carbon-related processes. By the time Sanjin Green Living commenced operations, we

had a comprehensive grasp of the mechanism," he said.

However, he said the center was still confronted with a lot of challenges in promoting the mini program.

"This mini program aims to instill in citizens the concept of green travel and green consumption because many people didn't have this concept before. Going from nothing to something, this is the most difficult aspect," he said.

Liu highlighted that Shanxi authorities have successfully utilized various opportunities to promote the mini program. At a conference centered on energy conservation in public institutions held in Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi, last year, all employees in these institutions were encouraged to adopt the program.

Thanks to a fund of 4 million yuan provided by the Shanxi Provincial Department of Ecology and Environment, the center also introduced incentives to promote the program. The carbon credits earned through the mini program can be exchanged for prizes including prepaid supermarket gift cards and drinks, according to Liu.

The platform has attracted businesses to contribute prizes, including bakeries, tourist companies, coffee stores and grain producers.

The efforts have paid off. Last year, the number of users on the mini program soared by 2.4 million, Liu said.

Users can gain credits by riding shared bikes, using and charging electric vehicles, opting out of disposable tableware when ordering take-out, recycling and sorting their trash.

Among these carbon reduction scenarios, waste recycling surpasses all others in terms of public engagement and its impact on carbon reduction. Almost 85 percent of emission reduction on the Sanjin Green Living mini program was contributed by Aifenlei, a WeChat mini program for online garbage collecting.

Liu said the center is still in negotiations with subway and public bus operators in order to incorporate public transportation as a carbon reduction scenario in Sanjin Green Living.

Given the sensitivity of subway ridership data, it is imperative that it is made anonymous before being integrated into the Sanjin Green Living mini program. "Technical teams from Taiyuan's subway operator and the center are in close communication," he said.

Lang Shuai, a 35-year-old Taiyuan resident, said, "Sanjin Green Living enables ordinary individuals to deeply engage in carbon emission reduction."

Lang started using the mini program in January last year and has recommended it to many friends. "The user experience of the mini program is quite good. It has changed my lifestyle habits, enabling me to opt for a green and low-carbon lifestyle as much as possible in my daily life," he said, adding he has made sure to commute by shared bike every day since becoming a user.

Contact the writers at houliaqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

GLOBAL LENS

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From left: Joyce Malindi, 72, reacts when competing in the Sukuma Mbokodo Support Group Elderly Beauty Contest on May 13 in Thokoza, Gauteng, the first black township established in the southern part of South Africa. Emmah Jele, 74, competes in the elderly beauty contest in Thokoza on May 13. PHOTOS BY PHILL MAGAKOE / AFP



Margaret Fatyela (center), 78, smiles after being crowned the winner of the contest on May 13.



Sukuma Mbokodo Support Group founder Dizzy Mbuli (center) dances with other competitors during the contest on May 13.



The elderly beauty contest winners pose for a photo after the prize giving ceremony of the contest on May 13.

Ageless beauty

South African grannies scorch the catwalk

At 17, Joyce Malindi won her first beauty contest under the restrictions of the apartheid practicing South Africa. Fifty-five years later, she was back on the catwalk, silver curls gleaming and brown clogs clicking, in a pageant for grandmothers.

The event in Thokoza township outside of Johannesburg, South Africa, featured prayers, speeches and a performance against domestic violence.

But the main attraction was on the red carpet stretching down the community hall where grandmothers paraded with pride in a competition that is rare.

"This takes me way back, brings my youth back," Malindi, a great-grandmother of five, told AFP, breaking into a joyful jig to "Happy Mama" by legendary South African jazz musician Hugh Masekela.

In this version of a beauty contest there were no swimsuit or evening wear categories. Instead, women paraded in their Sunday best, from sleeveless summer frocks to bold orange headwraps, strings of pearls to traditional wear.

Floral fabrics and well-loved kitten heels hinted at celebrations past.

Supporters — mostly women from the Sukuma Mbokodo Support Group that organized the show — clapped, ululated and fiddled with their phones to record the spectacle.

Feeling 'young' again

At the makeup corner, the top request was for deep red and berry toned lipsticks, but most contenders chose to let their bare faces and bright smiles shine. Nearby, a teapot served cups of chai beside trays of scones.

"They don't focus. When you are doing their makeup they want to multitask, talk, bark instructions," said 19-year-old volunteer hairdresser Ntokoza Ntshinga.

The youngest contestant was 63 years old and the oldest 81.

But it was septuagenarian Margaret Fatyela who took the silver-coated crown.

"We are now like school children," she said, seated next to her modest prize of a tea set and a bag of toiletries. It was the first time the former domestic worker and mother of eight had entered a pageant.

"I feel like I am young again, capable of doing everything," she said, looking toward the first runner-up, Lidia Mokoena, 81.

'Forgotten' grandmas

Organizers said the event was intended to celebrate the grandmothers and great-grandmothers on whom South Africa's largely impoverished society depends, even if they remain in the shadows.

Nearly four in 10 children are raised in homes headed by grandparents, according to official data, with many parents forced to relocate for work, a high rate of teenage pregnancies and AIDS-related deaths among the contributing factors.

"Often times the minute they take pension they are forgotten citizens, and all they do is look after great-grandchildren and grandchildren," local official Bridget Thusi said.

"To have programs like this where they are celebrated and to forget the problems at home was really an amazing thing to see," she said.

For Malindi, it was a boost after losing her husband four years ago.

"At our old age, we thought that maybe because our husbands are gone, everything is gone, it's the end of the world," she said.

But the event "picked our spirits up ... taught us we are still alive and life still goes on, we better make ourselves the right grannies," she said, her brown eyes sparkling.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Nozizwe Khumalo (center), 77, gets her makeup done prior to competing in the contest on May 13.



Emma Khanyi, 68, reacts while competing in the elderly beauty contest on May 13.



Alinah Tshonisile, 77, waves after being declared as the runner-up in the contest on May 13.



From left: Contestants wait for the announcement of the results during the elderly beauty contest in Thokoza on May 13. Maria Molefe, 72, dances while competing in the contest on May 13.



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WORLD

Spain sees another major utility disruption

By JONATHAN POWELL
in London
jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

A major disruption in Spain's telecommunications infrastructure early on Tuesday affected emergency response systems and business operations nationwide, the second significant utility failure to hit the country in recent weeks.

The telecom outage, triggered by a planned network upgrade at provider Telefonica, primarily affected fixed-line services, including the internet. It also disrupted voice communications across multiple regions.

The incident left several regional emergency services unreachable, forcing local authorities to establish alternative contact numbers for essential public safety operations.

The telecoms giant described the disruption as affecting only "specific services".

The system failure impacted the 112 emergency phone number in regions such as Andalusia, Aragon, La Rioja, the Basque Country, Galicia and the Valencian Community, said Telefonica.

The telecom network failure impacted multiple providers, and led to widespread connectivity issues across major cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville, according to trade news website TechInformed.

According to Downdetector, a real-time monitoring platform that tracks service disruption, around 72 percent of complaints on Tuesday morning involved fixed internet services, followed by signal loss and complete outages, as reported by Spanish newspaper El Pais.

Telecom services were fully restored later in the morning following the outages. This was the region's second major infrastructure disruption following last month's power blackout that affected essential services across Spain and Portugal.

The major power outage on April 28 was attributed to high-voltage grid malfunctions, and raised critical questions regarding the resilience of vital utility networks across the Iberian Peninsula.

The power disruption lasted almost 23 hours, affecting essential services — from traffic signals and public transportation to electronic payment systems and aviation operations.

Spanish authorities have initiated formal investigations into the power outage incident, enlisting security agencies and technical specialists, and a high court judge is examining potential cyberattack connections to the blackout.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and national power grid chief Beatriz Corredor have rejected claims linking the incident to Spain's growing dependence on renewable energy.

Interior minister takes helm of French conservatives

By MOHAMMAD ARIF ULLAH
in Paris
for China Daily

Bruno Retailleau, currently serving as France's interior minister, was elected on Sunday as the new head of the center-right party The Republicans, or LR.

In an internal vote held on Sunday at the party's national headquarters in Paris, Retailleau won a commanding 74.2 percent of support among party members, defeating his rival Laurent Wauquiez, who secured just 25.8 percent.

This victory not only cements Retailleau's authority within the party but also positions him as a potential challenger to President Emmanuel Macron's political legacy, and analysts say the result underscores a broader reconfiguration of the French right.

LR and the political movements that came before it once dominated French politics, producing two presidents — Jacques Chirac (1995-

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People gather to buy livestock at a traditional market in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, on Thursday, ahead of Eid al-Adha, a major Muslim holiday. As part of the tradition, Muslims slaughter a sacrificial animal and divide the meat into three portions — one for the family, one for friends and relatives, and one for the poor and needy. MAST IRHAM / EPA-EFE

Cultural exchanges with US vital amid tensions

Collaborations in arts remain resilient despite geopolitical headwinds: Scholar

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

Cultural and artistic exchanges remain vital and resilient channels of cooperation between the United States and China, despite their geopolitical tensions, and policy and logistical headwinds in the US, according to a scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Speaking at the National Committee on US-China Relations' annual Members' Program on Tuesday, Alison M. Friedman, executive and artistic director of Carolina Performing Arts, noted that "the arts are the good news", even amid the downturn in the relationship and domestic challenges to arts funding in the US.

She said the rolling back of grants in the US is a "new backdrop" that is affecting US involvement in international cultural exchange generally, not just with the US and China.

"The bright spots are, there's still tremendous desire on behalf of institutions to keep things going," she said, citing ongoing collaborations such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition on Chinese bronzes developed with the Shanghai Museum.

The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post praised the show, *Recasting the Past: The Art of Chinese Bronzes, 1100-1900*, as "ambitious, refined, refreshing", and "enormously appealing". It runs through Sept 28.

Friedman, who lived and worked in China for two decades, acknowledged that the broader environment for international arts exchange has become increasingly difficult, pointing especially to the

skyrocketing costs and uncertainties around artist visas.

Premium visa processing — once an optional expense — has now become essential just to meet performance deadlines, costing up to \$3,500 per visa without guaranteed results, according to Friedman.

"And with arts funding in the US being rolled back, institutions that typically brought artists from China and other countries as well, simply can't afford the visas to get artists over here," she said. "So, the challenges are there, but the institutions that have always been doing the work haven't cut ties yet on both sides."

Despite the hurdles, Friedman sees encouraging signs of sustained engagement and interest, especially among younger generations. "The huge drop that we saw of American students going to China after COVID is extremely concerning," she said, warning of the long-term consequences.

But she also pointed to hopeful developments: "The application rate for NYU Shanghai was higher than ever this year — even since pre-COVID numbers."

Immersive experience

Friedman said that immersive, on-the-ground experience in China is irreplaceable for building understanding.

She shared a story of an NYU Shanghai student who "was not doing so well in his Chinese class" and instead "took three months off and bicycled from Shanghai to Xi'an, learning Chinese by chatting with fruit sellers". These "transformative" and "contextual" experiences are what shape long-term perspectives and relationships, she said.

She also noted a growing tendency among US institutions to take a "quieter" approach to China-related programming.

"Some of those art centers say, 'We're going to talk about it after it happens ... We'll advertise to sell tickets once it gets closer. But in the preparation, we're being much more *didiao* (low-profile), much more under the radar about it,'" Friedman said. "The sensitivity is much more coming here (the US) than going there (China)."

In a period of tense relations, Friedman sees cultural collaboration as a quiet, persistent lifeline between the US and China.

"This is, in some ways, a time of much quieter foundation-laying," she said, "to keep ties that exist strong, so that when there is a shift, when there is presumably some moment to do more, it's not starting from scratch."

During the discussion, Friedman highlighted the power of authentic, artist-driven cultural expression.

"When an artist has something really powerful to say and starts getting invited to festivals, suddenly audiences look up and say, 'Wait, China has really avant-garde, modern dance.' And that view of China has to get a little bit bigger to make room for that."

Earlier this month, the Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng encouraged more US citizens to "come and discover China".

At the 2025 Opera Gala hosted by the embassy and the Kennedy Center's Washington National Opera on May 2, Xie emphasized the significance of people-to-people friendship in building enduring relations and peace between nations, noting that "it matters even more at difficult times".

However, current government spokeswoman Sophie Primas, also a member of the party, defended his decision on BFMTV on May 16. "He is committed to both roles and will manage them responsibly," she said.

Retailleau's rise comes at a moment of major change in French politics. Macron cannot run for the presidency again due to term limits, and Marine Le Pen, a leading figure in the far-right National Rally, may face legal issues that could affect her possible candidacy.

This creates a rare opportunity for new leadership on the right. With a clear majority inside LR and rising popularity, Retailleau is now a serious contender.

Experts say it remains uncertain whether Retailleau can unify the fractured right and mount a viable presidential challenge in 2027. For now, however, he has firmly captured the political spotlight.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Sino-Thai joint marine and polar studies urged

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Thailand should further enhance collaboration on marine research and polar study amid the increasing challenges from climate change, as such a partnership could bring scientific solutions for sustainable development of both nations as well as the wider world, experts said at a conference.

To celebrate the arrival and docking of China's icebreaker *Xuelong 2* in Thailand from Monday to Friday, a symposium was held in Bangkok on Thursday with the support of the Polar Science Consortium of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University and the Polar Research Institute of China.

The *Xuelong 2*, which took part in China's 41st Antarctic expedition, is scheduled to arrive in Shanghai in June. The special detour to Thailand on its way back to China is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Thailand-China diplomatic relations.

Speaking at the conference, one of two Thai scientists who had joined China's 41st Antarctic research at the Great Wall Research Station, said the study tour was very precious for Thai scientists when it came to marine and polar studies, and it will also contribute to Thailand's efforts at addressing climate change.

"Without such collaboration with China, we would never be able to do such a remarkable polar trip, which allows us to have firsthand information about the Antarctic," said Sujaree Bureekul, an assistant professor from the Department of Marine Science at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, who also traveled with *Xuelong 2*'s research expedition to the Arctic Ocean in 2023.

China operates five Antarctic research stations in Antarctica. All of them are supported by *Xuelong 2*, which is notable for its ability to break ice both forward and backward, navigating through ice up to 1.5 meters thick.

"Today's symposium brings together leading minds from both nations on polar research, ocean science and environmental studies. Such exchange of ideas will pave the way for future joint research, advocacy building and youth engagement," Pairash Thajchayapong, secretary-general of the Princess Sirindhorn IT Foundation in Thailand, said at the conference.

As climate change poses a common challenge for the whole world, a deeper understanding of its mechanisms, along with proactive adaptation and mitigation strategies, has become essential for sustainable development, said Sun Shuxian, China's vice-minister of natural resources.

In his opening speech at the conference, Sun noted that China is actively exploring ocean-based solutions to address climate change, while promoting the green and low-carbon transformation of traditional industries.

These scientific and technological innovations have been actively applied to China-Thailand marine cooperation. It has also extended its impact across Southeast Asia, establishing itself as a "blue model" for regional cooperation, he said.

Under the framework of the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences, China and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016 for cooperation in polar science research.

"We hope to renew the MoU for further cooperation between China and Thailand, boosting the future of joint polar research and international scientific cooperation in a changing climate," said Long Wei, deputy director of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration under the State Oceanic Administration.



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A Thai volunteer guides visitors onboard China's icebreaker *Xuelong 2* on Wednesday. The ship stays in Thailand until Friday and is open to the public. HUANG TAOMING / XINHUA

AC revolution promise in UK lab's new refrigerant

CAMBRIDGE, United Kingdom — The soft, waxy "solid refrigerant" being investigated in a UK laboratory may not look very exciting, but its unusual properties promise an air conditioning revolution that could eliminate the need for greenhouse gases.

The substance's temperature can vary by more than 50 C under pressure, and unlike the gases currently used in appliances, solid refrigerants do not leak.

"They don't contribute to global warming, but also they are potentially more energy efficient," Xavier Moya, a professor of materials physics at the University of Cambridge, told Agence France-Presse.

Approximately two billion air conditioner units are in use worldwide, and their number is increasing as the planet warms.

Between leaks and energy consumption, the emissions associated with them are also increasing each year, according to the International Energy Agency.

Moya has been studying the properties of these plastic crystals in his laboratory at the prestigious UK university for 15 years.

On his work surface, a large red and gray machine, topped with a cylinder, tests how the temperature of a substance changes under pressure. The aim is to identify the best refrigerants among this class of materials, which are already used

by the chemical industry and are relatively easy to obtain, even if the exact composition of the crystals eventually selected remains secret.

The phenomenon is invisible to the naked eye, but these crystals are composed of molecules that spin on their own axis.

When the substance is squeezed, that movement stops and the energy is dissipated in the form of heat. When released, the substance cools its surroundings in what is known as the "barocaloric effect".

"We're expecting demand for air conditioning to increase hugely, globally, between now and 2050," said Cliff Elwell, a professor of building physics at University College London. He believes barocaloric solids have the potential to be as efficient as gas, if not more so.

Alongside his research at Cambridge, Moya founded the startup Barocal in 2019 to turn his research group's discoveries into tangible products.

The startup is attracting interest and in recent years has raised around \$4.5 million, notably from the European Innovation Council, an EU program involving the UK; and Breakthrough Energy, an umbrella group of initiatives founded by US billionaire Bill Gates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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WORLD

China-built water project revives Kenya's farmlands

By SHARON NAKOLA
in Nairobi, Kenya
sharon@chinadailyafrica.com

Along the sun-drenched banks of River Nzoia in western Kenya, a quiet transformation is taking root. Fields that once lay bare, scorched by droughts and battered by unpredictable floods, now flourish with rows of thriving crops, nurtured by the steady waters of newly built irrigation canals.

At the heart of this change is the Lower Nzoia Irrigation Project, the biggest of its kind in Kenya, built by China's Sinohydro Corporation. The 250-kilometer Nzoia River is a major tributary of Lake Victoria and supports millions of people in western Kenya.

For local farmer Henry Odhiambo, these changes are more than visible — they are deeply personal. After years of working in South Sudan, he quit his job and returned to his home in Siaya County, drawn by the promise of this transformative project.

"I left my work in South Sudan to come home and do farming," Odhiambo says, standing amid neat rows of black nightshade vegetables. "This area, once bushy and neglected, is now alive. We have water, we have crops, and soon, we will have stable incomes."

For decades, communities along River Nzoia have lived with uncertainty. The land's potential was crippled by its reliance on rain-fed farming, with erratic weather patterns leaving families vulnerable. Today, thanks to global cooperation and modern infrastructure, hope is once again taking root in the soil.

The project is no ordinary infrastructure undertaking. It is a lifeline for more than 12,000 farming households, designed to irrigate 8,000 hectares of farmland — 4,000 in its first phase, scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, and another 4,000 to follow.

"This is the first crop," Odhiambo says, pointing to his vegetable fields. "After this, we'll rotate to other crops to improve the soil and increase our earnings. This is not just farming; it's a business now."

In many other African countries also, lack of irrigation poses a major challenge to agricultural production and food security. Although agriculture is a pillar sector in Kenya, only 5 percent of the country's total arable land is under irrigation, says Eric Mugaa, Kenya's cabinet secretary for water, sanitation and irrigation.

With the implementation of the irrigation project, many farmers in Siaya along the river shared their optimism with Odhiambo.

"Before this project, we had to buy vegetables and other food," Florence Aoko Oduor says. "Now, we can grow

our own. It's feeding our families and our livestock. The water has changed everything."

Oduor says that with abundant water, the Chinese-built canal near her home will enable her to transition from subsistence to a profitable farming venture.

Peter Onyango Okola, a village official in Siaya, leads a group of more than 650 farmers who have felt the project's effects.

"We now have access to water through the canal, which has changed everything," he says. "Our fields are no longer at the mercy of the weather. This will improve food security and create employment for many families."

At the core of the project's success is a comprehensive approach to modern agriculture. Miriam Otipa, the project's senior agronomist, explains that this is not just about increasing food production — it is about connecting farmers to sustainable markets.

"For the past five years, we've educated farmers and organized them into groups," she says. "They now select crops based on soil suitability, ensuring higher yields."

Market opportunities

To create dependable market opportunities, the project has partnered with an off-taker who supplies farmers with seeds, fertilizers and crop protection products — and will later purchase the harvest for sale in nearby Kisumu city.

"Farmers are no longer growing just to eat. They're growing to earn," Otipa says. "With irrigation, they can harvest up to three times a year, compared to just once with rain-fed farming. That means more food, more income and more opportunities."

For the project that started in 2018 aiming to mitigate floods and increase the acreage of land under irrigation in western Kenya, the technical backbone was no small feat. Francis Mburu, the resident engineer for the irrigation project, recalls the obstacles faced during construction.

Drainage posed one hurdle in project implementation. The original design included just nine drainage canals, which proved inadequate.

"We increased that number to 76," Mburu says. "This has solved water-logging issues and protected the canal infrastructure."

Liu Ming, a Chinese engineer for the project, says it has created jobs, increased local incomes and even reduced crime. "We're seeing a safer, more hopeful community emerge."



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An aerial view of the head works of the Chinese-built Lower Nzoia Irrigation Project. WANG YUXI / CHINA DAILY



Members of a diplomatic delegation from the European Union walk near the eastern entrance of the Jenin camp during a visit to the occupied West Bank on Wednesday. The Palestinian Authority accused Israeli forces of firing on diplomats as they assess the dire humanitarian situation in the city, releasing video of two soldiers aiming rifles at a group of people. MOHAMMAD MANSOUR / AFP

Firing on diplomats draws global outrage

'Warning shots' by IDF in West Bank spark calls for probe, accountability

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadailyapac.com

More than a dozen governments from the Arab region, Europe and Asia have slammed Israel after its military fired "warning shots" at a group of about 20 diplomats near the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday.

The delegation — including ambassadors and consuls from Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Russia, Turkey and the United Kingdom — was on a preplanned visit to assess the dire humanitarian situation in Jenin.

Several countries whose representatives were in the group summoned their respective Israeli ambassadors — asking them to explain the incident and initiate a probe into the matter.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said China is closely following the incident and firmly opposes any act that threatens the safety and security of diplomatic personnel.

She also called for a full investigation and efforts to prevent such incidents from happening again. "Amid ongoing tension in the West Bank, China urges relevant parties, especially Israel, not to take any escalatory moves," she said.

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also denounced the shooting incident in a statement.

It called on the international community, particularly the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, to take immediate action to stop Israeli violations against civilians, diplomatic missions and relief organizations operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

"The Kingdom reiterates its

demand for the activation of international accountability mechanisms in response to the ongoing crimes committed by the Israeli occupation" and its repeated violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, the statement said.

Jordan, Qatar and Turkey were among the Middle Eastern countries to condemn the latest incident. Several European countries also made their objections known, including Germany and France, which said the incident was "unacceptable".

Mexico's Foreign Ministry said the Israeli military justified the action by claiming that the diplomatic delegation had entered an "unauthorized area". However, Mexico said there was no record of this occurring or of any officer approaching the delegation to warn them verbally.

Regret expressed

The Israel Defense Forces said it regretted the incident and the inconvenience caused. The IDF said it has ordered an inquiry and is expected to hold talks with representatives from countries involved to clear the air.

The military alleged that the diplomatic delegation had strayed from a preapproved route. The Times of Israel reported. The visit to the camp, where a recent military operation destroyed more than 100 buildings, was coordinated in advance, the military said.

Despite growing pressure from the international and domestic community, the Israeli army had intensified its bombardments across Gaza, targeting medical facilities such as the Al-Awda Hospital in the north of the enclave, and demolishing houses in the West Bank.

On the day the shooting incident occurred, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a rare news conference reiterating the key conditions for ending the fighting in Gaza.

The conditions are: the release of all Israeli hostages, the removal of Hamas from governing Gaza, the group's permanent disarmament, and the White House's controversial Gaza plan, which involves US control and the relocation of Palestinians.

Regional and international leaders have widely rejected the plan to uproot Palestinians.

Netanyahu said Israeli forces are landing powerful blows that will only get stronger against Hamas strongholds that still exist in Gaza, but promised that by the end of the operation, all the territory of Gaza will be under Israeli security control, with Hamas totally defeated.

Nagapushpa Devendra, a West Asia analyst and research scholar at the University of Erfurt in Germany, said the incident in Jenin "is a deeply troubling development" that raises serious concern about the safety of international personnel operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

"This event follows a broader and increasingly worrying pattern," Devendra said, noting that UN officials, humanitarian aid workers and journalists have also been subjected to threats or attacks while performing their duties in Gaza and the West Bank.

"Such actions, whether intentional or due to operational breakdowns, undermine essential humanitarian and diplomatic missions," Devendra told China Daily.

While Israel has cited security protocols, she said, the international community rightly expects full protection and respect for those upholding international law and humanitarian work.

Two Israeli embassy staffers shot dead in DC

WASHINGTON — Two Israeli embassy staffers were killed by a lone gunman in Washington on Wednesday night, and a suspect who chanted pro-Palestine slogans is in custody, officials said.

The two were shot as they left an event at the Capital Jewish Museum, about 2 kilometers from the White House.

Washington Metropolitan Police Chief Pamela Smith said a man shot at a group of four people with a handgun, hitting both the victims. He was seen pacing outside the museum prior to the shooting.

The victims were a young couple who planned to get married, said Yechiel Leiter, Israel's ambassador to the United States. The Israeli Foreign Ministry named them as Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Lynn Milgrim.

The suspect, identified as 30-year-old Elias Rodriguez from Chicago, chanted "Free Palestine, Free Palestine" after being taken into custody, Smith said.

"After the shooting, the suspect entered the museum and was detained by event security," she said. "Once in handcuffs, the suspect identified where he discarded the weapon, and that weapon has been recovered, and he implied that he committed the offense."

The suspect had no previous contact with police, she added.

US President Donald Trump condemned the shooting. "These horrible DC killings, based obviously on antisemitism, must end, now!" he wrote on Truth Social. "Hatred and radicalism have no place in the USA."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his heart ached for the families of the victims, "whose lives were cut short by a heinous antisemitic murderer".

Security would be stepped up at Israeli embassies around the world, he said.

Polarized debate

The shooting is certain to further convulse the US debate over the conflict in Gaza, which has polarized steadfast supporters of Israel and pro-Palestinian demonstrators, Reuters commented.

Conservative Israel supporters led by Trump have branded pro-Palestinian demonstrators as antisemitic.

Trump has cut off funding to elite US universities that he says have permitted antisemitic demonstrations, and his administration has detained foreign student demonstrators without charges.

US Attorney General Pam Bondi and Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro went to the scene after the shooting.

The event at the Capital Jewish Museum was organized by the American Jewish Committee, an advocacy group that supports Israel and confronts antisemitism, according to its website.

An online invitation to the event called it the Young Diplomats Reception, describing it as a bringing-together of Jewish professionals between the ages of 22 and 45 and the Washington diplomatic community.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

RUSSIA New chief named for ground forces

Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov has named Colonel General Andrei Mordvichev as commander-in-chief of the ground forces, the military newspaper Red Star reported on Thursday. Belousov described the 49-year-old general as "an experienced combat officer who has fully demonstrated his leadership abilities during the special military operation". In February last year, Mordvichev led the capture of Avdiivka in Donetsk, for which he was awarded the Hero of the Russian Federation.

AUSTRALIA Floods leave over 50,000 stranded

Record floods stranded more than 50,000 people in eastern Australia

on Thursday, killing three as a muddy tide swept through towns and swollen rivers cut off roads. Police have pulled three bodies from rising floodwaters on the Mid-North Coast, about 400 kilometers north of Sydney. Authorities launched a major search-and-rescue mission as people clambered atop cars, houses and highway bridges to escape flash floods. The storms have dumped more than half a year's worth of rain over just three days, the government weather bureau said. "We are seeing levels in local tributaries, creeks and rivers that we haven't seen since 1926," said Chris Munro, premier of New South Wales.

UNITED STATES Jetliner accepted from Qatar as gift

The United States has accepted a luxury Boeing 747 jetliner as a gift

from Qatar and the Air Force has been asked to find a way to rapidly upgrade it for use as a new Air Force One to transport President Donald Trump, the Pentagon said on Wednesday. Qatar's offer of the jet — which is valued in hundreds of millions of dollars — has raised huge constitutional and ethical questions, as well as security concerns about using an aircraft donated by a foreign power for use as the presidential plane. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth accepted the jet in accordance with all federal rules and regulations, Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said, adding that the Defense Department "will work to ensure proper security measures and functional-mission requirements are considered". Legal experts have questioned the scope of laws relating to gifts from foreign governments that aim to thwart corruption and improper influence.

PHILIPPINES Marcos seeks 'bold reset' after poll fiasco

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr sought the resignation of all his cabinet secretaries on Thursday after disappointing results for his party at the midterm elections, a move seen as an attempt to reset the political agenda. The order came after the president's allies failed to win a majority of Senate seats contested in the May 12 polls, leaving Marcos facing a divided political and legislative landscape that could thwart his attempts to have an ally succeed him in 2028. "The people have spoken, and they expect results — not politics, not excuses. We hear them, and we will act," Marcos said, calling his plan for cabinet renewal a "bold reset".

AGENCIES — XINHUA

Tragic day remembered



Black Lives Matter supporters gather in Los Angeles on Wednesday to mark the fifth anniversary of George Floyd's killing by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020. Floyd, a black man, died after Derek Chauvin, who is white, knelt on his neck as Floyd repeatedly gasped, "I can't breathe" — a cry that galvanized a global movement against racial injustice and police brutality. DAVID SWANSON / REUTERS

BUSINESS

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Support for free trade ups sentiment

Fast-paced advancements in sci-tech help other countries leapfrog ahead

By WANG KEJU
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China's efforts to promote free trade and investment and contribute to stable supply chains will inject much-needed certainty and confidence into the global economy amid rising unilateralism and protectionism, senior officials and global executives said on Thursday.

In particular, China's fast-paced advancements in science and technology and its willingness to foster an open innovation ecosystem will help other countries to leapfrog and promote inclusive development, they said during the Global Trade and Investment Promotion Summit 2025 in Beijing.

"We advocate for openness, connectivity and equality instead of isolation, decoupling and discrimination," said Ren Hongbin, chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Ren said China, along with the rest of the world, will jointly uphold and practice true multilateralism, and actively advocate for a fair, just, and open global trade and investment environment.

As the United States has been waging a tariff war against dozens of countries over the past few months, Beijing has been pushing ahead its opening-up efforts, such as slashing the negative list for foreign market access, upgrading its free trade zones and expanding openness in the services sector.

Despite the ongoing tensions, the economic integration between China and the US is simply too entrenched to be easily severed, said Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

Hart said that China's development is a chance for the international community, including US

companies, to reap the benefits, and US businesses are willing to actively engage with their Chinese peers and expand their presence in the Chinese market.

Technologies like artificial intelligence are at the forefront of collective advancement for the world, Hart said, expressing hope that the world's two largest economies would find more avenues for cooperation in these areas in the future.

Dilma Rousseff, president of the New Development Bank, said these breakthroughs in the tech sector "have the potential to revitalize trade, to reconfigure global value chains and alter geopolitical dynamics".

"The attitude of China promoting cooperation, win-win approaches and clear support for shared technology and innovations create a promising scenario for emerging markets and developing countries," Rousseff said.

As the global AI race intensifies, China is prioritizing cost-effectiveness and open-source models and making cutting-edge AI capabilities available to a wider range of users, both domestically and globally. A prime example of this approach is DeepSeek, an advanced large language model launched by Chinese researchers at a mere fraction of the cost of comparable US offerings.

The Belt and Road Initiative, in particular, has expanded access to capital, technology, infrastructure, energy transition and connectivity for many developing countries, Rousseff added.

"Innovation in China is unlimited," said Christos Vlachos, director of Athens-based Silky Finance, an independent financial adviser, adding that China's emphasis on mutual benefits is making technological catch-up for other countries more possible.



A guest shakes hands with a humanoid robot at the ongoing fourth China-CEEC Expo in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Trade, business with Central, Eastern Europe on the rise

By ZHONG NAN and CHEN YE
in Ningbo, Zhejiang

Central and Eastern European countries' expanding cooperation with China will further energize regional economic activity and deepen industrial integration in the coming years, said senior government officials on Thursday.

Speaking at the ongoing fourth China-CEEC Expo in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province, which runs from Thursday to Sunday, they said the partnership between China and the CEEC has transitioned from policy coordination to practical results, with growing two-way trade, big-ticket infrastructure projects, and green and digital industry cooperation taking center stage.

Richard Rasi, chairman of the Slovak National Council, said Slovakia welcomes Chinese investment, particularly in projects that offer added value in innovation, research and development, and new technologies.

These projects, led by Chinese companies — including battery maker Gotion High-tech Co and automaker Zhejiang Geely Holding Group — will not only drive regional development in Slovakia, but also further strengthen the country's leading position in the field of electric mobility in Europe, said Rasi.

Chinese companies have been expanding their presence in the CEEC through increased investment and industrial chain integration in recent years, especially in the areas of household appliances, electric vehicles and power

battery manufacturing sectors.

China's investment in the CEEC exceeded \$24 billion as of May 9, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Meira Hot, vice-president of Slovenia's National Assembly, emphasized that cooperation between China and Slovenia aims to extend beyond the exchange of goods, reflecting a broader commitment to long-term partnership.

19.7 billion yuan

value of Ningbo's trade with the CEEC between January and April this year

She said China's recent decision to grant visa-free entry to Slovenian citizens has further strengthened people-to-people exchanges, while efforts such as the Belt and Road Initiative continue to create new avenues for collaboration.

Amid profound changes in the international landscape and growing challenges to global economic development, Jiang Yu, special representative for China-CEEC Cooperation under China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said China remains committed to being a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order.

"China will continue to pursue high-quality development and advance high-standard opening-up, while promoting mutually beneficial cooperation with countries around the world, including those in Central and Eastern Europe, to share development

opportunities and bring greater stability and certainty to the global economy," said Jiang.

Zhao Zenglian, vice-minister of the General Administration of Customs of China, said a growing variety of agricultural and food products from the CEEC have entered the Chinese market, generating new opportunities for CEEC businesses and providing Chinese consumers with a broader selection of high-quality options.

A total of 126 types of agricultural commodities from 14 Central and Eastern European countries have been granted market access to China, with 3,430 overseas agricultural businesses registered to date, Customs data showed.

The fourth China-CEEC Expo covers a trade exhibition area of 80,000 square meters, divided into sections for Central and Eastern European products and export-oriented consumer goods, according to information released by the Zhejiang provincial government.

The expo in Ningbo is expected to attract over 15,000 professional visitors, including more than 3,000 overseas buyers from 72 countries and regions, with anticipated import procurement intentions from Central and Eastern Europe exceeding 10 billion yuan (\$1.39 billion).

Ningbo, a major hub for China-CEEC trade, saw its trade with the CEEC surge 13.8 percent year-on-year to 19.7 billion yuan between January and April, said Ningbo Customs.

Contact the writers at
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Safe transport



Employees from the Pingyao Branch of Taiyuan Railway Logistics Center, under Datong-Qinhuangdao Railway Co Ltd, inspect the undercarriage of a train as part of continuous efforts to mitigate risks and enhance the overall safety and reliability of freight trains. LI TING / FOR CHINA DAILY

SHFE to roll out new futures products

By SHI JING in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Shanghai Futures Exchange will speed up the rollout of new futures products for casting aluminum alloy, liquefied natural gas, offset paper and corrugated paper as part of its efforts to better serve the real economy, its chairman Tian Xiangyang said.

The SHFE will also advance efforts to make nickel futures, among others, accessible to international investors, Tian said at the two-day 2025 Shanghai Deriva-

tives Market Forum on Thursday. Apart from the yuan-denominated crude oil futures launched in 2018, marking China's first futures product directly accessible to international investors, the SHFE has introduced five other internationally traded futures and options products over the past few years, including copper and low-sulfur fuel oil.

Meanwhile, the SHFE will accelerate efforts to launch portfolio margin and new trading orders so that the exchange's mechanisms are better aligned with international best prac-

tices while addressing China's own development needs, said Tian.

Over the past few years, Chinese companies have expressed rising demand for financial tools to guard against market risks as the international trade order is undergoing a restructuring and as geopolitical tensions rise, said Wang Ying, deputy head of the department of futures supervision at the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

Meanwhile, China is at a pivotal moment when old economic drivers are transforming into new ones. This requires the futures market to

play a bigger role, and deepen its ties with the spot market. Capital, resources and goods should be directed to areas generating higher yields, she said.

To promote an intensive and high-quality development of industries, the mismatch of resources should be addressed. Pricing signals should also truly reflect market performance so that companies can be better guided to manage their production and sales. Efforts can be made to lower trading costs and help companies secure profits while better managing risks, added Wang.

Zhou Xiaoquan, executive deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Finance, said at the forum

that the city will enrich the supply of commodity and futures products to empower the development of new quality productive forces. A complete derivatives product system can facilitate the real economy in terms economic capacity, he said.

The financial futures market should also address the needs of the real economy, said He Qingwen, chairman of the China Financial Futures Exchange. Financial futures should shoulder the responsibilities of stabilizing and invigorating the market at the same time, He added.

Data from the public domain show that about 1,450 A-share companies have released their hedging strategies for 2024. Among these, 457 companies used commodities

Transfar enhances employee capability

By CHENG YU
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Transfar Group is investing heavily to mobilize its 16,000-strong workforce in upskilling, digitalization and technological innovation, as the Chinese chemicals leader seeks to stabilize employment and advance industrial transformation amid rising global economic uncertainties.

Faced with a more volatile global environment, Transfar said its long-term success now hinges on evolving beyond its comfort zones. The group has launched a series of initiatives to engage employees directly in reform.

For instance, Transfar has prioritized skills training in response to the shift toward smart manufacturing. It now allocates over 100 million yuan (\$13.8 million) annually to worker development. In 2024, its employees averaged 75 hours of training each — double the figure from a year earlier.

A key objective is upgrading blue-collar workers into engineering-level professionals and turning function-based staff into cross-disciplinary experts. This aligns with China's broader "industrial workforce reform" agenda. The company has introduced fully subsidized higher education schemes, skill academies and a network of 25 master-level workshops.

More than 15,000 employees took part in skills competitions last year across 31 professional categories. Transfar also rotates university graduates and white-collar staff through frontline jobs to cultivate versatile talent. Senior executives now serve as internal lecturers, sharing hands-on experience and integrating talent development into performance reviews.

Meanwhile, Transfar has ramped up investments in digitalization and research and development, aiming to compete with global industry leaders. It boosted its annual technology spending by 50 percent, supported frontier collaborations with top institutions, including Zhejiang University, and empowered scientists and engineers with full-stack support.

Such efforts have driven milestones including breakthroughs in rare earth rubber materials and bio-based herbicides, both areas where Transfar has disrupted long-held foreign monopolies.

Xu Guanju, chairman of Transfar, said: "We will work hard to stabilize jobs and enhance skills, and remain committed to developing the enterprise through its employees."

"We will also strive to build a high-skilled, high-quality workforce for the new era, and advance enterprise reform and innovation — all to steadily move toward the direction of new quality productive forces."

On the digital front, the company is integrating AI into 58 work scenarios across 12 domains — from smart manufacturing to supply chain and customer service. AI assistants are now common in office settings and industrial floors alike, empowering workers to navigate the digital era with new tools.

In overseas markets, employees are taking on the role of frontline pioneers. From long-serving managers in Pakistan to textile chemical specialists operating across Bangladesh and Türkiye, Transfar staff are becoming key agents of globalization.

for hedging, up 254 percent from that in 2018.

This reflects listed companies' increased participation in futures trading, or derivatives trading overall, according to SHFE experts.

The futures market has become an important tool for public companies to manage risks amid rising challenges globally, they said.

The number of industrial clients trading in shipping index futures on the SHFE jumped 17 percent year-on-year in the first 10 months of 2024. These clients' holdings of the product increased by 40 percent year-on-year in October. Companies have increasingly used futures to offset their losses in the spot market, according to the SHFE.

COMMENT

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'Landmark' free trade deal with ASEAN fosters enduring common prosperity

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area is one of the largest free trade zones in the world, covering a population of more than 2 billion and a combined GDP of over \$22 trillion. Since its establishment in 2010, the CAFTA has greatly facilitated trade and investment between China and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, reducing or eliminating tariffs on over 90 percent of goods.

The upgrade to the CAFTA 3.0 signifies a deeper commitment to regional economic integration and cooperation, which is why the Chinese Commerce Ministry hailed it as representing "a landmark achievement in jointly upholding and advancing free trade" in a statement on Wednesday announcing the full conclusion of negotiations for version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. The upgraded CAFTA has nine new chapters, including those on the digital economy, the green economy, supply chain connectivity, standard technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures.

It expands tariff reductions to cover more goods and services, further lowering trade barriers and boosting cross-border commerce; promotes cooperation in emerging sectors such as e-commerce, green technologies, and sustainable infrastructure to align with global trends and shared development goals; strengthens regional supply chains to ensure stability amid global uncertainties, particularly in critical industries such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals; encourages cultural, educational and tourism exchanges; and provides a framework for post-pandemic recovery through increased market access, investment flows and collaborative projects.

Upgrading their free trade framework is conducive to the two sides widening and deepening regional economic integration.

The completion of the negotiations, which were launched in November 2022 and took nine rounds to complete, has not been easy, as the talks were carried out amid high regional tensions due to some external forces' divisive attempts, and against strong protectionist

headwinds.

That the two sides were able to overcome these difficulties and conclude their negotiations highlights their joint commitment to accelerate their supply chain integration and realize regional self-reliance.

With the upgraded CAFTA, China and ASEAN have countered the efforts to try to drive a wedge between them, injecting greater certainty into the regional economic landscape and global trade. The upgraded embedding of their supply chains in strategic fields will further enhance the region's ability to respond to geopolitical risks.

So it is not just the completion of the negotiations that should capture attention but also the demonstration effect, especially at the moment when world trade is at a crossroads. By continually upgrading their free trade area, China and ASEAN have developed into each other's largest trading partners and important investment partners, bringing tremendous tangible benefits to their peoples and turning the region into the world's most dynamic growth engine.

In the process, they have also consolidated their joint commitment to support economic globalization and multilateralism, and are on way to building a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

More important, the concluding of the negotiations shows that the two sides bear the bigger picture in mind, and adhere to the principle of resolving their differences through dialogue and negotiations in good faith. In so doing, they are playing a leading and exemplary role for countries, particularly those of the Global South, to adhere to openness, inclusiveness, cooperation and win-win results.

According to the CAFTA 3.0, the two major developing economies will expand mutual opening-up and comprehensively deepen their cooperation in emerging fields and new quality productive forces. This will provide critical institutional guarantees for building a vast China-ASEAN market and ensure sustained momentum for advancing the China-ASEAN community with a shared future, and fostering enduring common prosperity and development.

Closer partnership for global stability

The recent visit to China by Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp, at the invitation of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, marks a step forward in the ongoing high-level diplomatic exchanges between China and the European Union and its member states.

The visit comes on the heels of a series of high-level diplomatic engagements, including meetings with Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and telephone discussions with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski. These interactions underscore the deepening ties between China and the EU.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the EU's predecessor, the European Community, on May 6, 1975. Over the past five decades, China and the EU have cultivated a robust trade and investment relationship, with bilateral trade soaring from \$2.4 billion annually to \$786 billion in 2024. European companies such as Volkswagen, Siemens, Philips, Heineken, Maersk, and Carlsberg have become household names in China, reflecting the depth of economic cooperation between the two sides.

Moreover, China and the EU have established various dialogue and consultation mechanisms spanning the strategic, economic, trade, digital, environmental, and people-to-people domains, underscoring their commitment to expand cooperation and address differences.

The history of the past 50 years demonstrates that despite their different political systems and development paths, China and the EU have reaped substantial benefits from their cooperative endeavors. Their partnership has thrived on mutual respect and shared interests, with both sides emphasizing collaboration over conflict. Their multilateral coordination has delivered solid results.

China-EU relations have grown into one of the most influential relationships in the world, making important contributions to enhancing the well-being of the people of China and Europe and promoting peace and develop-

ment in the world.

As key proponents of multilateralism in a multipolar world, China and the EU advocate for upholding international norms and institutions, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, while opposing protectionist measures and divisive geopolitical strategies.

The recent exchanges between China and the EU carry added significance as both parties reaffirm their commitment to defending international laws and norms, tackling global challenges, and promoting peace and stability in regions like Europe and the Middle East. By aligning their efforts on issues such as climate change, pandemic response and conflict resolution, China and the EU can leverage their collective strengths to foster positive outcomes on the global stage.

They should uphold multilateralism, safeguard fairness and justice, oppose unilateralism and bullying, strengthen their collaboration to address global challenges, and work for an equal and orderly multipolar world and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, so as to contribute more to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

While acknowledging existing differences, such as trade disputes and human rights concerns, the progress made in resolving them through dialogue and cooperation underscores the potential for constructive engagement between China and the EU. By strengthening their mutual understanding and embracing collaboration, rather than confrontation, both sides stand to unlock new opportunities for economic growth and social advancement. The EU's pursuit of strategic autonomy should not come at the expense of the partnership with China, as mutual cooperation holds the key to unlocking shared prosperity and innovation.

By transcending their differences and embracing the spirit of mutual respect and collaboration, China and the EU can set a positive example for the international community and contribute to a more harmonious and interconnected world.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

A red line that ensures development while protecting biological diversity

Although we mark May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity, as established by the United Nations, it seems the objectives behind marking the day have not been fully realized.

Deforestation, habitat loss and species extinction are continuing at alarming rates.

The WWF's Living Planet Report 2024 revealed a catastrophic 73 percent decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations from 1970 to 2020.

According to the UN's 2020 Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report, none of the 2020 UN global biodiversity targets set in Aichi, Japan, in 2010 have been achieved at a global level.

China is not immune. Rising temperatures, retreating glaciers and permafrost degradation, for example, have taken a toll on the number of snow leopards roaming in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

Just like many other countries in the Global South, China faces significant challenges in harmonizing economic development with conservation efforts.

While more than meeting three of the Aichi targets — establishing terrestrial nature reserves, restoring and ensuring important ecosystem services, and increasing ecosystem resilience and carbon storage — China has made progress in 13 others, such as mainstreaming biodiversity and sustainable management of agriculture, forestry and fishery.

According to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, more than 300 rare and endangered wildlife species have been well restored in China.

The crested ibis serves as an example. The species that has existed for over 60 million years and was once abundant in Northeast Asia was believed to have become extinct in the 1960s because of habitat destruction caused by the excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers.

When researchers discovered seven crested ibises in Yangxian county, Shaanxi province, in 1981, they were believed to be the last survivors of the species. Today, there are at least 5,000 crested ibises in China.

Several factors are behind this resurgence. As China builds an ecological civilization guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, a slate of measures have been rolled out for ecological conservation.

China has had various environmental inspections, including one targeting only protected areas, to rule out violations that may jeopardize species habitat. But a key element of the crested ibis' recovery has been the implementation of a red line system, a conservation mechanism that China began exploring around the year 2000.

The initiative encircles areas for critical ecosystems such as biodiversity hotspots and fragile regions. Traditional nature reserves, typically small and species-specific, often exist as isolated pockets. The red line framework

bridges these disconnected areas and incorporates regions unsuitable for traditional reserves.

As climate change threatens existing habitats, the red line system strengthens ecological resilience by facilitating migration.

In the red line areas, the authorities permit limited economic activity, compensating residents affected by the restrictions.

Last year, the central authorities rolled out guidelines to essentially establish, by the end of this year, a zone-specific environmental management system.

The initiative features a customized blacklist for project introduction in three categories: those earmarked for priority protection, key control and general control. This ensures that some key areas that are not covered by the red line mechanism are not sacrificed on the altar of economic development.

China's experience in exploring the red line mechanism offers developing nations an alternative path to modernization, resonating well with the theme of this year's International Day for Biological Diversity: "Harmony with nature and sustainable development".

Let's embark on a new journey for biodiversity conservation, drawing inspiration from China's experiences, to protect the planet we call home and endangered species that are our invaluable companions.

— HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

'Golden Dome' another way to fleece US taxpayers

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that his administration had "officially selected an architecture" for the "Golden Dome" national ballistic and cruise missile defense system it plans to develop as a necessary response to "threats" from other countries. A budget package that would provide an initial \$25 billion in funding for this "state-of-the-art" project is currently being deliberated by Congress.

An unclassified assessment by the US Defense Intelligence Agency shows the military expects to be contending with "missile threats" that are greater in "scale and sophistication in the coming decade", noting specifically that "China and Russia are developing an array of novel delivery systems to exploit gaps in the current US ballistic missile defenses".

The other countries the United States named include the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran.

Although the US' homeland has never been attacked by any country since the end of World War II, hyping up such "threats" has become a conventional practice for the Pentagon, if not the military-industrial complex in the US to secure funds.

The members of Congress are well aware of that but they are more than happy to give a green light to it as they invariably belong to the vested interest group that can benefit directly or indirectly from such funding deals.

China is the only country among the four portrayed by the US as a

"threat" that has sizable common interests with the US in economy and trade. The US administration has to bear in mind the heavy toll it takes on Sino-US relations each time it resorts to the fallacious "China threat" rhetoric to justify what is actually some vested interest groups' embezzling of US taxpayers' money.

The "Golden Dome" is a global, multi-level, multi-domain missile defense system that goes far beyond the purpose of defense. With it in place, the US openly seeks a significant expansion of outer space-based combat capabilities, including the development and deployment of orbital interception systems.

The so-called defense system, which carries clear offensive implications and violates the principle of peaceful use of outer space as enshrined in the Outer Space Treaty, is expected to become a core component of the US' space bulwark serving as strategic intimidation to the rest of the world, accelerating the US' colonization of outer space and turning it to an extended arena for its geopolitical games.

As Mo Ning, spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, warned on Wednesday, the US move will serve to heighten the risks of turning space into a war zone, and trigger an arms race.

China's development of its national defense capabilities is to safeguard its core interest and regional and world peace. It is the US that has defined

China as its primary strategic challenge and acts accordingly. China still sees the US as a partner, and consequently it has exercised tremendous restraint in the face of the US' provocations under the guise of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

China is taking all necessary means to safeguard its security. But none of the progress China has made in this regard has the US as its target.

Be it artificial intelligence technology and cyberspace, or the outer space and the Asia-Pacific, China always proposes to the US that they should join hands to deepen their cooperation and strengthen their communication in these strategic sectors because doing so is not only in their common interest but also that of the world.

China's development cannot be checked, and China's connection with the world, including the US, cannot be severed. If the US pushes too hard to contain China and tries to separate it from the rest of the world, it is actually suppressing its own development and making itself isolated.

Also, the more the US peddles its isolationism, unilateralism and hegemony, the more space it is actually creating for China to promote cooperation, multilateralism and mutual learning and assistance in the world.

The US should accept what has become increasingly evident, that no country will become more secure by making others insecure.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street, London EC6A 3DF, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1400 Broadway, Suite 400,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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COMMENT

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Trade conflicts erode US global leadership

The temporary de-escalation of China-US trade tensions can temporarily soothe the global market's nerves. The tariff conflict between the world's two largest economies serves no one's interests.

While the stated objective of the US administration's policy to impose high tariffs was to decrease the United States' trade deficit with China, the underlying motivations extend beyond economics to geopolitical considerations. Washington aims to impede China's global technological expansion.

In the face of the escalating trade war with the US, China has adopted an integrated stimulus policy to further stabilize the domestic economy and minimize the impact of US tariffs. For example, Chinese government spending in 2025 increased to more than 8 percent of GDP, compared to 6.6 percent in the previous year, in a move aimed at stimulating domestic demand and increasing productivity in key sectors. This policy reflects an integrated strategy to boost the domestic economy and reduce dependence on foreign markets, within the framework of expanding the national economy.

The global economy is under mounting pressure from slow growth, inflation, geopolitical instability, and intensifying trade tensions. These factors heighten the risk of a global recession, as existing economic measures are proving insufficient to stabilize the fragile system.

The intensification of US tariffs under the US administration has triggered significant realignments in global trade dynamics, with China actively exploiting the opportunity to deepen ties with Washington's traditional partners. China is courting the EU and Southeast Asian nations through diplomatic efforts and promises of increased trade. Several countries — particularly in Europe and Asia — see potential in trade cooperation with China, especially if it includes investments and technology transfer. Simultaneously, dissatisfaction with the unpredictability of the US administration has pushed countries such as Canada, Mexico, and EU members to seek certainty elsewhere, including through greater cooperation with China and among themselves.

Moreover, the global trade system appears increasingly fragmented. Two emerging blocs illustrate this: the "open market allies", composed of relatively free-trade advocates such as the EU, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership members, and other developed economies; and the "strategic hedgers", including India, Brazil, and South Africa, which seek to balance between US and Chinese influence with a pragmatic trade approach. These shifts mark a move away from a US-centric trade order toward a more multipolar,



It is also further enhancing its global competitiveness by investing heavily in future technology such as artificial intelligence and renewable energy.

flexible structure, with countries diversifying alliances to secure their economic interests amid rising protectionism.

The ongoing trade dispute between the United States and China has the potential to accelerate the transition toward a multipolar global system by undermining the dominance of the traditional liberal economic order and encouraging other global powers to assert greater autonomy. This strategic diversification opens space for other players such as the EU, India, and regional coalitions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to play more prominent roles in shaping trade norms, standards and alliances.

The erosion of US leadership — fueled by protectionist policies and withdrawal from multilateral agreements — has particularly enabled China to present itself as a champion of globalization, attracting nations seeking stable economic partnerships. As a result, trade fragmentation, economic nationalism, and regionalism are contributing to a more decentralized world order where power is diffused among multiple centers.

However, the emergence of a true multipolar system is not guaranteed and may be constrained by structural imbalances and systemic dependencies. Despite the disruption caused by the trade war, the US and China still dominate global finance, technological innovation, and military power, limiting the ability of other states



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

to fully break free from their influence.

Additionally, many potential poles in the multipolar vision — such as the EU or India — face internal economic or political challenges that hinder their capacity to act cohesively or globally. Moreover, the deep entanglement of global supply chains, particularly in critical sectors like semiconductors and rare earths, still centers around China and the US, making any decoupling partial and selective at best. Therefore, while the trade conflict does create space for alternative power centers and new trade configurations, it is more likely to lead to a fragmented or competitive multipolarity rather than a stable, balanced multipolar global system.

Despite the ongoing trade struggle with the United States, China remains in a

strong position to strengthen its role in the global economy through several key strategies. By strengthening multilateral economic cooperation and expanding its trade partnerships in regions such as Asia, Africa and Latin America, China can continue to build and strengthen its economic network. It is also further enhancing its global competitiveness by investing heavily in future technology such as artificial intelligence and renewable energy.

The author is an associate professor of Political Science and International Relations, Suez Canal University and the Institute of Arab Research and Studies, Arab Republic of Egypt. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Diplomacy, wisdom are desperately needed to help end the Ukraine crisis

In the past more than three years, I have written many columns arguing that the only solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be found through a ceasefire, followed by peace talks and diplomatic maneuvers — the conflict cannot be resolved on the battlefield.

The same has largely been the stance of most countries, from China and Brazil to South Africa and Indonesia. However, my argument has often been labeled by many in the West as an attempt to appease Russia.

China's position document on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, issued in February 2023, and the shuttle diplomacy conducted by its special envoy for Eurasian affairs Li Hui over the past years have also been ignored by the United States and its allies in Europe.

Most NATO, G7 and European Union leaders had been parroting what former US secretary of state Antony Blinken kept repeating: that the US and its allies should not support a ceasefire or peace talks to end the Ukraine crisis until Kyiv gains strength and can negotiate on its own terms. Blinken insisted that a ceasefire would simply freeze the existing territorial lines.

It is an open secret that the Russia-Ukraine peace talks, which had been progressing well in Istanbul in April 2022, were sabotaged by then US and British leaders. Since then, any EU leader who tried to reach out to Russia has been lambasted for his or her attempts to "appease" Moscow. Such leaders include Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico who visited Moscow this month and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban who visited Moscow last year following his trip to Kyiv.

There is still no sign of EU leaders trying to reach out to Russia, though, in a bid to facilitate a ceasefire and peace talks.

Hence, it is quite amazing to hear European leaders calling for an unconditional ceasefire and supporting direct talks between Russia and Ukraine, like the one that was held in Istanbul last week. Nevertheless, it was a good move despite the contradictory stance many European leaders had taken earlier. The EU changed its stance after the incumbent US administration dramatically altered its policy toward the conflict. US President Donald Trump had vowed to end the conflict during his 2024 presidential campaign. He talked with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday for two hours, something that Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, had never done.

There is still no sign of EU leaders trying to reach out to Russia, though, in a bid to facilitate a ceasefire and peace talks. All they have done is to promise more military aid to Ukraine and threaten Russia with new sanctions if the latter didn't toe their line.

The EU foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels on Tuesday approved the 17th round of sanctions against Russia, this time targeting its so-called shadow fleet of oil and gas tankers, with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen saying Brussels is already preparing the 18th round of sanctions against Moscow.

If sanctions were a silver bullet, those "crippling" Western sanctions imposed on Russia over the past three years would have achieved the desired results. That clearly has not been the case. The new EU sanctions, however, are set to be less effective because the incumbent US administration has said it won't be a party to the move.

Worse, Trump said on Monday that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to "immediately" hold ceasefire talks, with US Vice-President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio indicating recently that the US would abandon efforts to end the conflict if no progress is made in the talks.

If a country wants to help end the Russia-Ukraine conflict through ceasefire, dialogue and diplomacy, it has to treat the other side, despite the other side being its "adversary", respectfully, instead of issuing threats and ultimatums.

The conflict has caused untold sufferings not just in Ukraine and Russia, but also in Europe as well as the rest of the world. To end those sufferings and settle the conflict once and for all, more active diplomacy is badly needed.

Asit K. Biswas, Cecilia Tortajada and Wang Hao

More publications, more knowledge application

More than 2,500 years ago, Confucius said, the "essence of knowledge is, having it, to apply it". As knowledge advanced, the quality of life and standard of living of the people advanced as well. During the early part of human history, philosophers such as Confucius, Aristotle and Leonardo da Vinci mastered almost all available knowledge.

Since 1500, knowledge generation has accelerated remarkably, almost doubling every 25 years by the end of World War II, with the duration reduced to 13 months by 2010. By 2035, it may double every 12 hours.

This raises two important questions: How can society keep abreast of and use this deluge of new knowledge? And how can available knowledge be used to improve human conditions and welfare across the world?

Advances in science and technology during the post-1980 period have been revolutionary. It's estimated that in 1980, storing 1 GB of data cost more than \$1 million, but by 2005, it cost a fraction of 1 US cent. Many companies now provide storage of several GBs of data for free. Computing costs have come down exponentially since around 1980, as have computing capacity. In 2017, the cost of translating 1 million Chinese words into English was roughly \$1 million. Five years later, such translations could be done for free. These advances are likely to continue well into the future.

An estimated 90 percent of all data currently available globally was collected in the past two years, with technological advances in data collection, storage and analyses revolutionizing the data management processes.

The advancement of knowledge over the past 300 years has mostly been beneficial to society. Until the late 17th century,



With strong and consistent support from the Chinese leadership, the country has emerged as a global leader in addressing water problems.

all disciplines of knowledge were known as natural philosophy. That's why the highest degree awarded to a scholar for mastering knowledge was called philosophiae doctor (PhD). Initially, a PhD degree was not given for original research, as is the case today, as PhD refers to the original Greek root of the word philosophy: "love of wisdom". Philo means love, and sophia wisdom. Initially, PhDs were awarded only in theology, law and medicine.

The concept of earning a PhD by conducting research started around 1500 in universities such as Paris and Bologna, and gradually spread to other universities. By the 17th century, it was evident that knowledge was expanding so fast that no one could master it all. So physics became a separate discipline in the 17th century, chemistry in the 18th century and biology in the 19th century.

In 1660, 12 men met at Gresham College, London, and decided to set up the first scholarly society in the world, the Royal Society of London. Its objective was to "promote physio-mathematical experi-

mental learning", and motto Nullius in verba (take nobody's word for it). Its journal, "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Journal", published many pioneering papers on science. In 1832, it started scrutinizing papers which later became the standard practice of all science journals.

Since the knowledge level during Confucius' time was low, he focused only on knowledge generation and application. Knowledge generation was mostly gradual till about 1650, after which it started accelerating, increasing exponentially during and after World War II.

Consider water. Up to about 1970, it was possible for a good scholar to keep abreast of new developments, even though the number of good journals published was in single digit; new books were few. But after 1970, the number of new books and journals dealing with water started proliferating. And around 1980, the objectives of scholarly publications changed.

To obtain tenures in universities, professors had to publish as many papers as possible, as their career advancement depended not on how good or how knowledgeable teachers were but on how many papers they had published in reputable journals. As a result, academics everywhere started to "artificially" increase the number of their publications primarily to boost their career prospects. It was also a byproduct of universities' quest for higher global rankings, which not only enhanced their prestige but also got them more funding, and attracted the best professors and students.

The generation of knowledge today is expected to address critical social, economic and environmental challenges facing countries, and help improve people's well-being. Knowledge should be aligned with national economic goals and contribute to industrial breakthroughs and

formulation of better policies.

Countries such as China and Singapore have put knowledge generation at the center of their national policies for well over two decades. In the water sector, the focus on knowledge generation and application with Chinese characteristics has made China one of the most advanced in the world. With strong and consistent support from the Chinese leadership, the country has emerged as a global leader in addressing water problems.

In order to ensure these positive developments in the water sector, as well as other similar global developments, are made known to the rest of the world, the Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research of the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources started a new journal, River, which publishes new ideas of river management from the source to the sea. It is an excellent medium to make water professionals in China aware of the new breakthroughs in river management made by other countries. On the other hand, people outside China can learn about the latest progress made by the country.

If Confucius were alive today, he could argue that in a world where knowledge is exploding, dissemination is an important part, along with generation and application, of knowledge.

Asit K. Biswas is a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Glasgow, UK, director of Water Management International Singapore; Cecilia Tortajada is a visiting professor at the University of Glasgow; and Wang Hao is an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a professor of China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



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

GRZEGORZ W. KOLODKO

All change

Anti-European agenda integral to 'Make America Great Again' heralds end of the West as we know it

Today the Chinese economy is no longer as tightly coupled with the United States as it was just a few years ago. China has strengthened its international economic position, concluding trade agreements with several countries in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia, and is currently the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries. In this context, the erosion of US leadership and credibility caused by the destabilizing actions of its new administration will be beneficial to China. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, Beijing, unlike Washington, supported key international institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as the Paris Climate Agreement.

In the early days of Donald Trump's second term as US president, US-European relations have taken the lead in global affairs due to the frictions resulting from the US administration's protectionist moves on the one hand, and the growing dilemmas already occurring within the European Commission and NATO headquarters in Brussels, on the other. Eventually — once the tensions in transatlantic relations subside — the most important aspect of international affairs, with fundamental implications for the entire world, will be the US-China relationship. Before this bond starts to improve, which is not likely to be seen soon, it will first deteriorate. This will also happen in

economic terms, with negative consequences not only for both the US and China, but also for other economies. However, despite the intentions of the US president, it is the US that will pay the most for his political whims. China will maintain its current political course and seek to maintain and further increase its influence on the international stage. As long as the Chinese government's policy delivers what the people expect — and they expect, first of all, continued improvement in their standard of living — such a policy will be appreciated and supported by the vast Chinese population. Increasing economic openness, engaging in cooperation with other regions and countries, making inward and outward foreign investment, taking part in WTO rules-based trade, transferring technology, strengthening people-to-people contacts — these are China's positive and pragmatic responses to development challenges. The intensification of activities within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative may contribute to the further strengthening of multilaterally beneficial economic cooperation. In an era of turbulent evolution of the international situation, every opportunity to improve external relations must be used wisely. China does this skillfully.

For example, they used the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, to discuss the launch of a system of international financial transfers that is not based on the US dollar. Now, in the context of the radicalization of the US' foreign policy, the BRICS members should intensify the conceptual and implementation work regarding an alternative settlement system. A growing pro-

portion of Chinese exports and imports with various countries will be invoiced and settled not in dollar but in the renminbi. The share of the Chinese currency in foreign exchange reserves of many countries may also increase, although the dollar will continue to dominate.

China's leaders and diplomats use various international forums to talk and negotiate with countries seeking to resolve conflicts of interest, numerous not only in structures as loosely coupled as BRICS or APEC, but also in the far more deeply integrated European Union, with which China wants to maintain the best possible economic relations. The EU should exploit this pragmatically, without taking a biased position in the China-US rivalry, where the latter will now push even harder. Such persuasions will be of little use because, with the aggressiveness of the politics practiced under the name of "Make America Great Again" agenda, which is in fact anti-European in more than one respect, China becomes de facto an economic partner of Europe, in particular of the EU. The sooner this is grasped by the political elite in Brussels, the better.

Rather than accepting the antagonistic division into the West, led by the US, together with the EU subservient to it, and the East, led by China — two great spheres of the world competing both directly and indirectly for influence in the Global South — it is better to see two peacefully competing mega-systems: Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian. The EU belongs to both and should effectively benefit from this fact for its own socioeconomic development. Contrary to appearances, there are more differences and less in com-

mon within each side. What we can be sure of is the internal evolution of these blocs and shifts in linkages both with each other and with external partners. We are facing the end of the West as we know it. And if it has not happened yet, it will likely happen quickly, with the politics and policies of the second

Trump presidency. The author is director of TIGER — Transformation, Integration and Globalization Economic Research — at Kosminski University in Warsaw, former deputy prime minister and minister of finance of Poland, and a distinguished professor at the

Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University. His latest book Trump 2.0: Global Disruptions and Power Shifts will soon be published by SPRINGER. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

WANG LEI

Flawed approach

Tariffs not only fail to address the underlying problems of US but also upset the international economic and trade order

Upon his return to the White House, President Donald Trump has championed "Make America Great Again", implemented "reciprocal tariffs", and initiated a trade war in an effort to bring manufacturing back to the United States, highlighting the severe structural problems in the US economy. Since the 1970s, the US has experienced a significant trend of "deindustrialization", with the service sector now constituting over 80 percent of its economy. While a significant portion of this sector comprises productive services that underpin US technology and advanced manufacturing, it is evident that manufacturing has substantially contracted within the US economic framework.

Data from the World Bank reveal that between 1995 and 2023, the share of manufacturing value-added in the US economy declined from 16.5 percent to 10.3 percent. This is markedly lower than the 2023 figures of Japan (19.2 percent), Germany (15.4 percent), the Republic of Korea (24.3 percent) and China (26.2 percent). Consequently, a consensus has emerged in the US that the contraction of manufacturing has reduced jobs, stripped technological innovation of vital application contexts and momentum, and increased risks to supply chain security.

Additionally, there is the perspective held by the US president and his aide, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, that the decline in manufacturing has necessitated a heavy reliance on imports. They contend that the US' current account deficit poses the major disadvantage, while countries with trade surpluses reap unfair benefits. Based on these fundamental insights, the US administration swung the tariff stick, making it clear that the goal of imposing additional tariffs was to repatriate manufacturing and realize the

re-industrialization of the US economy. A closer look at the US economy reveals its three key pillars: consumption that accounts for a substantial 70 percent of its GDP, the consistently high levels of national debt, and the US dollar's predominant position in the global financial system. To satisfy its vast domestic consumption demand, the US relies heavily on imports, which in turn generate a significant current account deficit. To finance this deficit, the US essentially exports dollars. These dollars then flow back into the US economy through investments from countries that hold trade surpluses. A large portion of these recycled dollars is channeled into purchasing US gov-

ernment bonds. These bonds serve as a crucial foundation for US consumption patterns and key macroeconomic indicators. Consequently, this dynamic establishes a dollar-centered international economic cycle. Within such an economic framework, internal contradictions have accumulated and manifested in two key issues. One is the soaring national debt. The US is grappling with a staggering national debt of \$37 trillion and annual interest payments exceeding \$1 trillion, placing immense fiscal strain on the country. Especially after the second quarter of this year, it will face a peak in debt maturities and an urgent need to replace maturing debt with new debt. As a result, the

US government expects the Federal Reserve to reduce interest rates to ease the burden of issuing new debt. The other is its weakened production capacity. Despite high-tech industries and advanced manufacturing, the US economy has seen a significant contraction in its manufacturing sector, leading to an overall weakening of production capacity. Transforming the insufficient production capacity through the return of manufacturing has become a strategic priority for the structural adjustment of the US economy. The current economic structure of the US has developed with a certain inevitability. At its core, the profit-seeking and self-augmenting

nature of capital has driven US manufacturing to places with lower production costs and higher profits. Imposing tariffs on other countries is unlikely to transform the US economic structure. In fact, the US, with the dollar's core position and other advantages, has gained the most from economic globalization. However, the enormous wealth that the US has acquired through its financial, technological and other advantages has been distributed unevenly. This has led to domestic social division, the rise of populism and political polarization. Today's global economy is an interrelated whole. Unilaterally imposing tariffs in a bullying manner and disrupting the global industrial and supply chains cannot resolve the imbalances in the US economy and society. The US administration's tariff measures echo the high-tariff policy implemented by president Herbert Hoover in 1930. However, a key difference is that the US was the global manufacturing hub back then, whereas today its economy is heavily dependent on imported goods. Thus, decoupling without securing alternative supply-chains is akin to economic suicide. The US administration's tariff-wielding has initially hit the US financial market, causing a synchronized decline in stocks, bonds and currency. This signals weakening confidence in the dollar and dollar-denominated assets, which in turn dampens dollar inflows. Under the shadow of reciprocal tariffs, the US business community and consumers are gripped by panic. As initial inventories dwindle, the supply of certain intermediate goods crucial for US manufacturing still faces risks of shortages and even disruptions. Meanwhile, the import costs of consumer goods

needed domestically are climbing, which could further drive up US inflation. As inflation expectations rise, the US Federal Reserve will find it increasingly challenging to make interest rate cutting decisions, and the immense pressure on national debt will be hard to alleviate. The US administration's move to raise tariffs is intended to bring manufacturing back to the country. However, the high uncertainty it has caused has had the adverse effect of dampening the motivation to invest in the US and undermined confidence in the US economy, thereby increasing the risk of stagflation and recession. China firmly opposes the weaponization of tariffs and steadfastly upholds its legitimate rights and interests as well as international fairness and justice. Recently, the China-US high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs was held in Geneva, Switzerland. Both sides engaged in constructive communication and achieved substantial progress. The White House has committed to removing 91 percent of the additional tariffs imposed on Chinese goods and suspending the 24 percent reciprocal tariffs. In response, the Chinese side announced it would do the same. The outcomes of this meeting satisfy the expectations of all parties and are in the common interests of China, the US and the world at large. The US side should thoroughly correct its erroneous approach of indiscriminately imposing tariffs and resolve differences through equal dialogue and consultation. By doing so, it can inject certainty and positive energy into the world economy, which is struggling to recover, through a mutually-beneficial and stable economic and trade relationship. The author is vice-chairman of the National Institute for Global Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Civilizations of the mind

China and Egypt share common features in their ancient roots, Zhao Xu reports.

Can you guess which exhibition has drawn the most visitors in the world? *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt*, currently on view at the Shanghai Museum, has welcomed over 2 million visitors since opening in last July, setting a global record for attendance at a single ticketed antiquities show. Of these, nearly 70 percent came from outside Shanghai, with most traveling specifically to see the exhibition.

"It's more than curiosity; it's a longing to understand a civilization as ancient and magnificent as our own," says Xue Jiang, one of the curators. "As two of the world's oldest civilizations, Egypt and China invite comparison, through the sophistication of their art and the shared values they reflect."

That sophistication resonates with Chinese audiences. Just as Egyptian art brims with symbolism, so too does ancient Chinese art — exemplified by the intricately cast bronze vessels of the Shang and Zhou dynasties between the 16th century and 3rd century BC — steeped in ritual and meaning.

"Both civilizations rose along rivers — the Nile, and the Yellow and Yangtze — which shaped their cultures, fostered agriculture, and inspired profound connections to nature," says Xue. "Despite no contact in antiquity, their spiritual and artistic affinities are striking."

The Nile, with its steady, life-giving floods, contrasts with the volatile Yellow River, the harnessing of which demanded resilience and ingenuity. Yet both rivers nurtured worldviews in which nature was not merely endured but revered — shaping ideas and beliefs that echoed the rhythm, cycles, and duality of the natural world.

"Both civilizations embraced the notion of duality: light and dark, order and chaos, heaven and earth," says Xue. In China, this balance is captured in the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, a Confucian classic dating to the 11th century BC. Rooted in the interplay of yin and yang, it reflects an early Chinese worldview in which existence was not fixed, but a fluid dance of opposites.

In Egypt, it could be glimpsed in the myth of Apep, the serpent of chaos, who battles Ra, the sun god, each night. Though Apep is vanquished each time, he returns, embodying the eternal struggle to uphold cosmic order.

Fittingly, 2025 in the traditional Chinese calendar is the Year of the Snake. In both cultures, serpents carried profound symbolic weight. On King Tutankhamun's golden mask, the cobra represents Wadjet, protector of Lower Egypt. After Egypt's unification around 3100 BC, Wadjet's cobra joined Nekhbet's vulture on the pharaonic crown, symbols of the unity of the two kingdoms.

Other serpentine deities included Renenutet, goddess of harvest, often shown with a cobra's head, guardian of granaries. The snake, close to the earth, symbolized fertility and the underworld, appearing in royal tombs to guide and protect the soul's journey beyond.

"Both cultures placed deep emphasis on unity, spirituality, and the afterlife," Xue notes. "Egyptians imagined a glorious hereafter, tombs being palaces for the soul, with mummies, amulets, and the *Book of the Dead* ensuring safe passage through the underworld."

The ancient Chinese shared this longing for permanence. Jade artifacts from the Liangzhu culture (3300–2300 BC), found in tombs along the Yangtze River Delta, were believed to preserve the body for immortality. Later, jade dragons and horses took on a sacred role: to carry the soul to heaven while protecting the body until their reunion.

Some Chinese scholars believe the dragon — Chinese civilization's ultimate totem — may trace its origins to snakes, crocodiles, or both, with crocodiles once common in the Yellow River Basin.

In Egypt, animals were often seen as divine. Hippos symbolized fierce protection; female baboons, maternity; and the scarab beetle — rolling dung across the earth — came to represent rebirth, echoing the sun's daily resurrection.

The elegance and realism of ancient Egyptian art reached its height in the depiction of animals, where art most vividly embraced life. A whip handle carved from ivory takes the form of a galloping horse; a cosmetic box mimics the shape of a wild duck; a stone gargoyle, sculpted as a lion, served as both architectural ornament and protector. Animal and human figures were depicted with each feature shown from its most recognizable angle — heads, legs, and feet in profile;

eyes and shoulders frontally — creating a composite image that conveyed an idealized, eternal form. This refined visual language, expressed through dynamic, economical lines, lends ancient Egyptian art a timeless, almost modern, sensibility.

"Though stylistically distinct, the artistic achievements of Chinese and Egyptian civilizations reflect and illuminate each other," says Xue, who also says that both placed great importance on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of writing.

"Both cultures prized learning and employed early pictographic and logographic writing systems."

It is believed that while deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs, French philologist and orientalist Jean-Francois Champollion (1790–1832) was partly inspired by the principles underlying Chinese character formation, including pictographs and ideograms.

While paper-making is widely, and rightly, credited to China in the early 2nd century, the ancient Egyptians were producing papyrus as early as 3000 BC during the Early Dynastic Period. Ancient Chinese paper-making involved soaking plant fiber like mulberry bark, beating it into pulp, and spreading it thinly on a bamboo screen to dry into paper. In contrast, Egyptian papyrus was made by slicing the papyrus plant's pith into strips, layering them crosswise, and then pressing them to bond and dry, before being polished into smooth writing sheets.

These innovations laid the foundation for historical record-keeping, which flourished in both civilizations. Ancient Egypt and China meticulously documented events, rituals, and daily life through hieroglyphs on stone and papyrus scrolls, or oracle bone inscriptions, reflecting a mutual commitment to the preserving of memory and the continuity of civilization.

Ancient Egyptian society was anchored by the pharaoh and upheld by priests, scribes, and artisans, while peasants and slaves labored below. Yet within this rigid hierarchy, women could rise to power. Among them was Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh to rule Egypt as a queen in her own right between 1479 and 1458 BC. Her counterpart in ancient China might be Fu Hao, a remarkable queen of the late Shang Dynasty (c.16th century–11th century BC) who lived in the 13th century BC, and served as a general, high priestess, and political leader — an extraordinary fusion of roles rarely held by women in antiquity.

"These trailblazing women offer tantalizing glimpses into two civilizations that have many striking parallels and intriguing contrasts," says Xue, who believes that ongoing collaborations between Chinese and Egyptian archaeologists are deepening cultural ties.

Since 2018, a joint archaeological mission has been underway at the Montu Temple in Luxor's Karnak Complex, in southern Egypt. In 2023, a major initiative led by the Shanghai International Studies University and Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities began digitally scanning, photographing, and researching around 1,000 wooden coffins unearthed in Saqqara, south of Cairo, using AI and database technology. Xue, a researcher of Egyptian history and art at the university, is leading the Chinese team on the Saqqara project.

The two nations are also co-nominating the Baiheliang Inscriptions in China and the Nilometer on Egypt's Roda Island for UNESCO World Heritage status — two ancient hydrological sites that reflect their shared emphasis on water management.

Today, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, a replica of the ancient Egyptian-Hittite peace treaty, also referred to as the Treaty of Kadesh, is prominently on display. This treaty, concluded around 1259 BC between Pharaoh Ramesses II of Egypt and King Hattusili III of the Hittite Empire, is recognized as the earliest known surviving international peace agreement.

"The replica at the UN serves as a powerful symbol of diplomacy and the enduring human pursuit of peace, which both ancient Egypt and China treasured dearly," Xue says.

"One timeless lesson from ancient Egypt and China is that civilization is not built merely of stone or bronze, but of vision," he continues. "Each sought, in its own way, to understand life and death, power and justice, nature and the divine. They stand as reflections of humanity's earliest dreams. And just as the rivers that once nourished them still flow, so too do the ideas they gave rise to."

Contact the writer at zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Below: Some of the cultural icons of ancient Egypt, including: the Great Sphinx of Giza, papyrus scrolls and the temple of Abu Simbel. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: A sculpture of the Pharaoh Akhenaten at the Shanghai Museum's groundbreaking exhibition *On Top of the Pyramid*. **Left below:** Mummy caskets on show at the exhibition. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY **Left:** Visitors ride camels in front of the Stepped Pyramid in Saqqara, Egypt, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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LIFE

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From left: The street view in Wanning, Hainan province, which was part of Shen Tie's 13-day journey from Beijing to Hong Kong in December. The 22-year-old journalism student takes a photo with a double-decker tram in Hong Kong. After a six-day journey by bus from Shanghai to Xiamen, Fujian province, 31-year-old Zhou Rongling is warmly welcomed by her family. At a bus station, Zhou learns to appreciate the slow lifestyle. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In an era dominated by high-speed trains and budget flights, a growing number of young travelers are redefining exploration by opting for slow, immersive journeys via public bus. The trend, driven by a desire for deeper cultural engagement and cost-effective travel, is reshaping how some among the younger generation experience the country's vast landscapes and diverse communities.

Most people would take a three to four-hour flight or the high-speed train to travel from Beijing to Hong Kong, but 22-year-old Shen Tie, a journalism student and self-proclaimed bus enthusiast, instead opted to take 120 buses, stopping at more than 3,100 stations on his winding 13-day journey along the public transit network in December, at a cost of 2,800 yuan (\$389).

Shen's fascination with buses began in kindergarten, when he would beg his parents to ride loops around his hometown of Jinzhou in Liaoning province instead of napping. "It's a niche hobby," he says, contrasting it with mainstream pastimes like sports or binge-watching dramas.

By middle school, he was plotting solo intercity trips, starting with a bus ride from Shenyang to Fushun in Liaoning in 2018. "It's about the experience, lingering in the street and observing everyday life," he says.

Now a junior at the Yantai University in Shandong province, Shen credits the extensive local rural-urban bus network for deepening his passion. "In Liaoning, there are few routes between cities but here, you can travel from Yantai to Weihai in Shandong for just 3 yuan," he says. His first viral video in March 2024 documented his bus trip, and unexpectedly resonated with thousands on social media. "It motivated me to keep sharing these journeys," he says.

Shen's ambitious Beijing-Hong Kong trek required days of planning. Without relying on navigation apps, he pieced together routes using map software, improvising when roads dead-ended or schedules shifted. "If a bus line was canceled, I'd detour west or backtrack to find alternatives," he says.

Winter made his trip more alluring, with the barren landscapes of North China gradually giving way to the tropical greenery of South China, a visual feast Shen documented from his favorite spot on the bus — the front row.

"I didn't visit famous sites recommended by social media influencers. For me, the journey itself was the destination," he says.

Apart from logistics, Shen's trips are a study in the regional diversity. He documents how bus designs shift from Beijing's Foton models to Shandong's Yutong buses, while dialects — Shanghaiese, Cantonese, Hokkien — become markers of place. "I've been recording station announcements since middle school. It's like collecting stamps," he says.

His encounters with drivers and vil-

lagers also reveal unexpected connections. Once, a bus driver recognized Shen from his viral videos, because it was his bus that Shen had taken by day.

The 22-year-old's unconventional approach attracts criticism. "People ask why I waste time instead of taking high-speed trains or planes," he says. "I'm not rushing to check off landmarks. I get immersed in the rhythms of ordinary life — the same way others spend a day sightseeing."

For Shen, buses are both transportation and cultural lens. "Half the appeal is the vehicles; the other half is the humanity you witness," he says.

Michael Rhys Card
Second Thoughts

little further afield, and you'll find countless hidden gems sitting in

In praise of slower pleasures

Eschewing planes and trains, some travelers are using buses to make the journey to their destination, Wang Qian reports.



Top: A sunset photo of a bus taken by Zhou on the sixth day of her trip. Above: As a self-proclaimed bus enthusiast, Shen likes to take photos of buses from different cities, such as (from left) Yantai, Shandong province, Panjin, Liaoning province, Huizhou, Guangdong province, and Nantong, Jiangsu province.

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He is planning a west-east route from Qinghai Lake in Qinghai province to Shanghai this summer, and is prepping more than 100 bus lines. His advice to aspiring bus travelers is to travel light, research schedules, and embrace spontaneity. "Always have a plan B — and ask residents if maps fail. They know best."

For 20-year-old Ye Shubo, a chemistry major at Nanjing University in Jiangsu province, bus travel is more than a mode of transportation. During his 12-day journey from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region, Ye took more than 60 buses and covered near-

ly 4,000 kilometers, spending about 7,000 yuan (including accommodation, food, and tickets).

"By bus, you see the gradual shift from bustling cities to remote villages and snowcapped mountains," he says.

Despite its appeal, bus travel isn't without its hurdles. Ye remembers a mishap in Xuancheng, Anhui province, where the infrequent schedule of a rural bus forced him to rely on a taxi driver's help. To mitigate such moments, he carried spare change for cash-only buses, researched regional schedules, and packed essentials like altitude sickness medication for high-elevation routes.

"You learn to adapt, like swapping summer clothes for layers when crossing into places like Xizang," Ye says.

While affordability matters, Ye emphasizes cultural curiosity for future bus trips. He plans to visit historical sites in Qingdao, Shandong, for its German-style architecture, and Shenyang for the 9.18 Historical Museum, which is dedicated to the rail incident Japan used as a pretext to invade China in 1931.

These bus trips mirror a broader movement among the youth. Social media platforms like Bilibili, RedNote, and Douyin have popularized "bus travel diaries", with influencers

documenting their cross-province routes.

Thirty-one-year-old Zhou Rongling's bus trip last year from Shanghai to Xiamen, Fujian province, was inspired by such posts.

When she quit her job at a game company in Shanghai in July, she didn't book a flight to her new workplace in Xiamen to reunite with her husband who works in the city. Instead, she embarked on a six-day, 1,000-kilometer trip through nine cities, transiting through 36 public bus stations.

Her 2,000-yuan journey, more expensive than two round-trip flights, began as a quirky challenge and later became a meditation on life. "Big-city life felt like I was spinning like a top, always about work, but on buses, I saw people I'd never notice in the workplace, who enjoy their slow-paced lives," Zhou says.

She mapped a route through small towns and rural landscapes rarely seen from high-speed trains or planes. At one stop, two strangers, an elderly man and woman, bonded over deciphering bus routes, sharing stories of their lives and hometowns. "These raw, unscripted moments are vanishing in our app-dominated world," she says.

At a lakeside village stop in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, the view framed by dark blue sky, and sunset glowing over rice fields, changed her perspective. "We're always chasing destination-worthy scenery, but the most beautiful moments are right beside us," Zhou says.

Posting her bus trip on RedNote, Zhou found that her trip was no longer just her own, but also evoked memories and one of the comments saying "that's the bus route to my grandma's house!" touched her heart.

The journey also became a metaphor for shedding life's burdens. Starting out with a backpack, laptop bag, and a cross-body bag, Zhou gradually mailed nonessentials to her flat in Xiamen. "By the fourth day, I had just one outfit. It made me realize how much we carry, physically and mentally, that isn't truly needed."

The reflection has inspired her shift to minimalist living in Xiamen, where she now rarely shops beyond necessities.

As a self-described "overthinker", Zhou intentionally left room for imperfection during her trip. When she missed the last departure of a cross-city bus, she took a train instead.

"Unlike work, this trip didn't need to be perfect, completion was enough." The mindset has carried over into her new job: "I used to obsess over others' approval. Now, I focus on doing my best within my capacity."

For those inspired to try bus travel, Zhou's suggestion is: "Slow down. Stay overnight in towns, eat local food. My regret was rushing."

Contact the writer at wangqian@chinadaily.com.cn

An exhaustive effort: On the trail of Beijing's hidden history

When it comes to Beijing, what first come to mind are the grand imperial landmarks — such as the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, and the dozens of other magnificent temples and structures, big and small, peppered throughout the capital. But dig a little deeper and set your sights a little further afield, and you'll find countless hidden gems sitting in

plain sight, both inside and outside city limits.

This is a fact I soon discovered after joining a trail running club earlier this year — a hobby that allows me to combine my love of running with photography. Though not for the faint of heart, trail running offers a unique, albeit extremely exhausting, way of experiencing more of the natural landscapes that surround Beijing and other parts of China.

I actually made one attempt at a trail run in 2021, and I hated every moment of it — 21 kilometers through the mountains in 32-degree heat. But my desire to explore

while staying fit, along with the enticing name of the club, HiGO (short for "Hi friend, let's go"), and its equally inspiring slogan *zhuri*, meaning "chasing the sun", drew me in enough to give the sport a second chance.

With routes that typically take you through mountains and forests, the trail eventually became a unique experience. On a recent run starting at Dajue Temple, we followed a route known as the Three Peaks — a particularly grueling 21 km course covering Luobadi North Peak (1,146 meters), Yangtai Mountain (1,278 meters), and Miaofeng Mountain (1,291 meters). The trail eventually

wound its way down into a small village nestled at the base of a valley. I took the chance to explore while we were there and spotted some elderly hikers making their way up stone steps to an ancient shrine perched on the edge of a rocky outcrop.

As I made my way over to them, the hikers kindly explained that this was a place to pray to Guanyin (the bodhisattva of compassion, also known as Avalokitesvara) — an influential goddess said to be a protector and healer, a compassionate listener (as her name means "the one who perceives the sounds of the world"), a figure of

enlightenment, and even a goddess of fertility.

After some more very broken conversation, I continued on my way. Though it was only a brief, if memorable encounter, experiences like this more than justify the sore muscles — and, in my case, creaky knees — that come with trail running. It's a great way not only to stay fit, but also to explore the nature and history of Beijing in a special way and meet like-minded people with whom to share the experience.

Contact the writer at michaelrhyscard@chinadaily.com.cn



A statue of Guanyin at the village shrine. MICHAEL RHYSCARD / CHINA DAILY

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SPORTS

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Zheng will be joined in the women's main draw by world No 42 Wang Xinyu (left), while in the men's draw, China's hopes rest on the shoulders of its lone entry, world No 70 Buyunchaokete. GETTY / REUTERS

"I don't think there is any player that I don't want to play against, or that I want to avoid, because, in my head, I've already prepared. If I want to win the title, I have to be able to beat everyone there."

Zheng Qinwen, on challenging for the French Open crown

By SUN XIAOCHEN
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Even without the strength in numbers, the Chinese tennis contingent, led by Paris Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen and rising men's ace Buyunchaokete, is approaching this year's French Open with major ambitions.

With the memories of her golden finish at Paris 2024 still fresh, Zheng returns to Roland Garros touted as one of the title favorites for this year's French Open, but insists that she will keep her expectations in check, noting that it's a different challenge to go all the way at the clay-court major compared to her Olympic triumph.

"I will say that I always feel confident going back to Roland Garros. But, at the same time, I know it is still a bit different," Zheng said in her pre-tournament interview.

"Because the Olympic Games were one week, while the French Open is two weeks, so you need to prepare your body for a longer time and you need to win seven matches in a row, one more match than the Olympics.

"You have to be prepared for every type of player. This year, I will try to be more complete with my clay court game," said Zheng, who was eliminated by unseeded Ukrainian Elina Avanesyan in the third round last year.

The 22-year-old world No 8, who described the Olympic gold medal as her biggest career achievement so far, has backed up her French Open credentials with a series of resurgent performances on clay recently.

Zheng's Rome Open quarterfinal win against bitter rival Aryna Sabalenka last week, having previously lost to the Belarusian star six times in a row, has certainly served up an extra confidence boost.

Still, she needs to step it up a gear if she is to break out from a strong and open field in the French capital.

"I always tell my team that, if I could choose which Slam to win first, it would be Roland Garros," said Zheng, who made an immediate mark by fighting into the fourth round on her Roland Garros debut in 2022 in her first full year on the WTA Tour.

"It's the major where I reached my first Grand Slam round-of-16. I have a lot of special memories here.

"But, last year, the result didn't go the way I wanted. So, this year, I will come back with a stronger mindset and more fight."

A surging group of international stars, led by the mighty No 1 seed Sabalenka, four-time Roland Garros winner Iga Swiatek and red-hot Rome Open champion Jasmine Paolini, suggests that Zheng will need to

dig deeper on the tricky and unpredictable surface.

"It's not easy to finish a point (on this surface). Everybody has to fight so hard, which makes tennis on clay more interesting," she said.

"I don't think there is any player that I don't want to play against, or that I want to avoid, because, in my head, I've already prepared. If I want to win the title, I have to be able to beat everyone there.

"It doesn't matter who I face, because if I finish the whole tournament without beating a player that I have never beaten before, that's not fun. I love the challenge."

Alongside Zheng, only one other Chinese woman, world No 42 Wang Xinyu, has made it into the main draw through rankings, while 89th-ranked Yuan Yue also qualified as a substitute.

Men's solo entry

On the men's side, only world No 70 Buyunchaokete appears in the



World No 89 Yuan Yue, pictured in action at the WTA Abu Dhabi Open, has also qualified for the French Open as a substitute. EPA

draw, with 71st-ranked teen star Shang Juncheng and No 81 Zhang Zhizhen both having withdrawn

due to injuries.

The quartet makes it the smallest Chinese contingent in three years at

Novak Djokovic launches his latest bid for a record-setting 25th Grand Slam title at the French Open, hoping to fight off his advancing years and end a 10-month wait for his 100th ATP tournament victory.

The 38-year-old has struggled to reach his best since defeating Carlos Alcaraz to win Olympic gold in Paris last year, and returns to Roland Garros shortly after splitting from coach and former rival Andy Murray.

"I know what it takes to be a Grand Slam champion," said Djokovic, speaking ahead of this week's warm-up event in Geneva.

"It's not as smooth and easy for me as it was 10 years ago. Obviously, things change, and my life has changed a lot, but for (the) better, to be honest."

The Serbian has proven at various points this year that the old magic has not completely gone, with highlights including his Australian Open quarterfinal victory over Alcaraz and a run to the Miami Masters final.

But, a loss in that match to teenager Jakub Mensik was followed by

back-to-back exits in his opening matches at the Monte Carlo Masters and the Madrid Open, against Alejandro Tabilo and Matteo Arnaldi, respectively.

Djokovic has uncharacteristically lost six times already this year to players ranked outside the world's top 30.

"(I'm just) trying to win a match or two, not really thinking about getting far in the tournament," Djokovic admitted after his loss to Arnaldi in Madrid.

"It's a completely different feeling from what I had in 20-plus years of professional tennis.

"It's a challenge for me, mentally, to really face these kinds of sensations on the court, regularly going out early now in tournaments."

Djokovic, the last active member of the 'Big Three' following the retirements of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, has been ranked outside the world's top three since September.



Novak Djokovic signs autographs after beating Hungary's Marton Fucsovics at the ATP 250 Geneva Open on Wednesday. AP

The former world No 1 equaled Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles at the 2023 US Open.

However, he has had five attempts

since at setting an outright record, but without success, with the closest effort being a Wimbledon final defeat to Alcaraz last year.

Injuries have had an impact, with

Roland Garros, which seems to be an almost sacred place for Chinese tennis, thanks to Zheng's Olympic victory and retired legend Li Na's groundbreaking 2011 French Open win.

China's Olympic mixed doubles silver winner Wang (pairing with Zhang) will also need to draw on her own sweet memories at Paris 2024 to change her fortunes and fuel her first deep run in this year's clay court swing.

The 23-year-old power hitter has lost three out of four matches on clay this season, with her only W being a straight-sets victory over German qualifier Eva Lys in the first round at WTA 500 Strasbourg, France, on Monday.

She was stopped by Kazakhstan's 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina the following day, and has not yet rediscovered her best form on clay, it seems.

In the men's draw, China's sole entry Buyunchaokete, known as

"Little Bu" by fans, has raised his fair share of expectation by overcoming a strong field to reach the final of an ATP Challenger event in Turin on clay.

Bu's first run to a final on clay at an ATP tournament saw him upset Italy's former world No 9 Fabio Fognini in the second round, and Argentina's No 52 Camilo Ugo Carabelli in the semis, before being stopped by Kazakhstan's eighth seed Alexander Bublik in the title match.

That deep run, though, has helped Bu overtake his compatriot Zhang as China's top-ranked player on the ATP Tour, further consolidating his career upswing since his breakthrough results last fall, when he reached back-to-back Tour-level semifinals on home soil, first at the ATP 250 Hangzhou Open, and again at the ATP 500 China Open.

"Gradually, I think I've become more confident and comfortable facing this level of competition on the Tour," said Bu.

Djokovic battling age and form on quest for record

"(Competing) became a bit more challenging for me, to be honest. But, of course, I'll do my best."

It has been touted as the most open Roland Garros men's draw in decades given Djokovic's form and the absence of the retired Nadal, but Djokovic has often bounced back emphatically when counted out in the past.

The last time his future was seriously questioned was following a shock 2018 French Open quarterfinal loss to Marco Cecchinato, when he was hampered by an elbow injury, which saw him drop out of the world's top 20.

Back then, Djokovic responded by winning Wimbledon a month later and was No 1 by the end of the year.

He will be hoping the next tournament in form during his illustrious career starts in Paris over the coming weeks.

"I feel that I still have the game, that I can be one of the contenders for the top Grand Slam titles," Djokovic said.

Djokovic withdrawing from the 2024 French Open ahead of the quarterfinals and retiring from his Australian Open semifinal against Alexander Zverev in Melbourne four months ago.

Djokovic opted not to play at the Rome Open, which was won by Alcaraz on Sunday, and is instead warming up for Roland Garros at a low-key event in Geneva.

World No 1 Jannik Sinner and Alcaraz are the two French Open favorites, but Djokovic will still fancy his chances of a deep run.

The three-time champion has had 165 of his clay-court matches so far this year, but he won the last big tournament missing from his resume at the Paris Olympics.

"Every time I step on the court I feel the nerves, I feel stress, I feel everything that, I guess, all the other players feel, and excitement as well," he said last month.