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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.

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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 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.

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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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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

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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

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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 sand dunes. 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 Lu, but not Lu, 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
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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 Mkwana, 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.

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Chips: More robust legal framework to safeguard cooperation

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“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 Computer 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.

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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 say 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.

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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
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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
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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

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 a report 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 LI JINGQING in Kunming
and CHEN MEILINGYUNNAN'S BIODIVERSITY
NURTURES MIRACLES of NATUREProvince 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.

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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, 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 and Parks 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 super-market 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.

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Ballet maestro's fond China memories

Ben Stevenson reflects on decades of cultural exchange, heartfelt friendships

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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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
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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

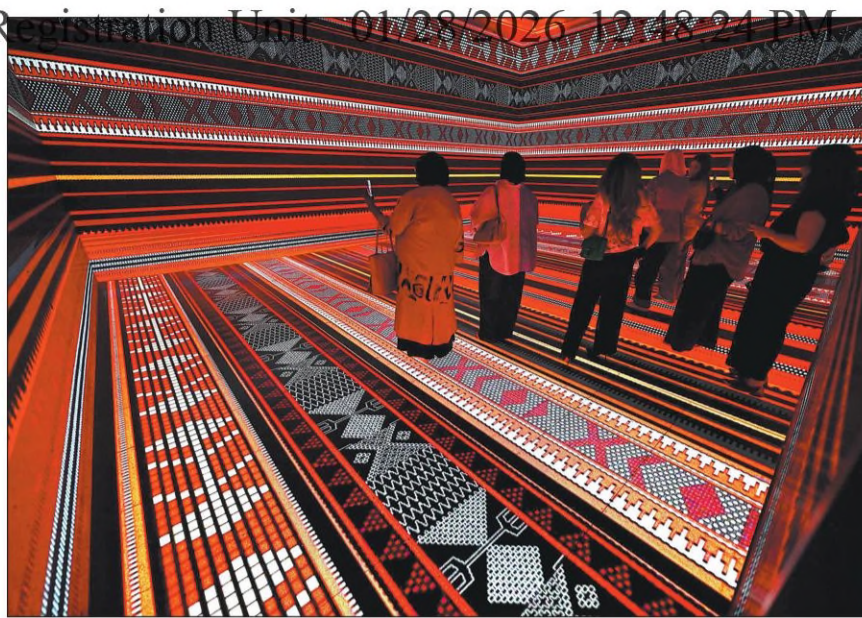
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will chair the third China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Xiamen, Fujian province, from May 28 to 29, the first of its kind to be held offline in China. Foreign ministers or representatives from 11 island countries having diplomatic relations with 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
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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
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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 driving 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
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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
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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
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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 0.19 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

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COMMENT

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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 a 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.

Pavel 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.

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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 developmental 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.

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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**
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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 Zhongyang, 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.

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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 (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

Harmonizing film with ancient tradition

Chorus group works to preserve unique musical heritage from China's mountainous regions, **Chen Nan and Yang Jun** report.

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."

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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, a 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.

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By YANG FEIYUE
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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.

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Fatal attack

Two Israeli embassy staffers shot dead in Washington, DC
WORLD, PAGE 9



Low-carbon lifestyles gain extra credit
GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



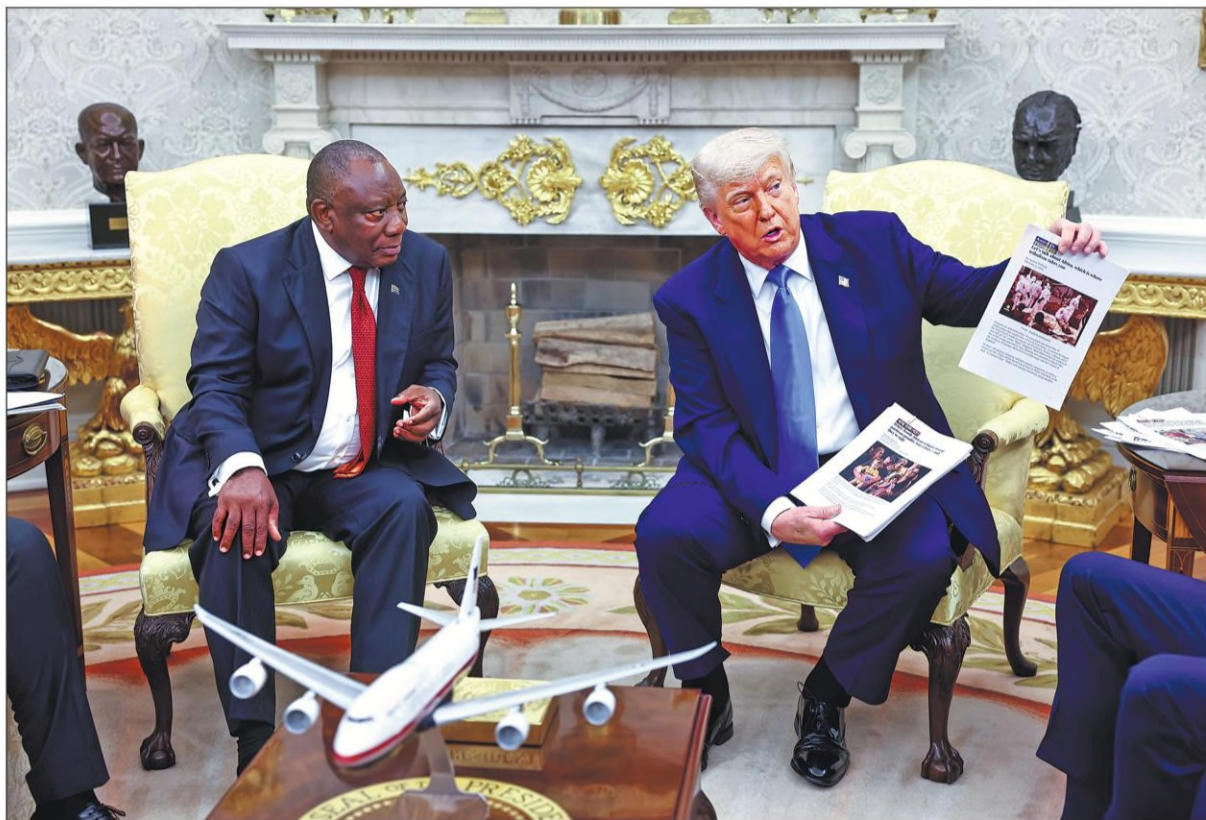
Courting battle

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
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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
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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.

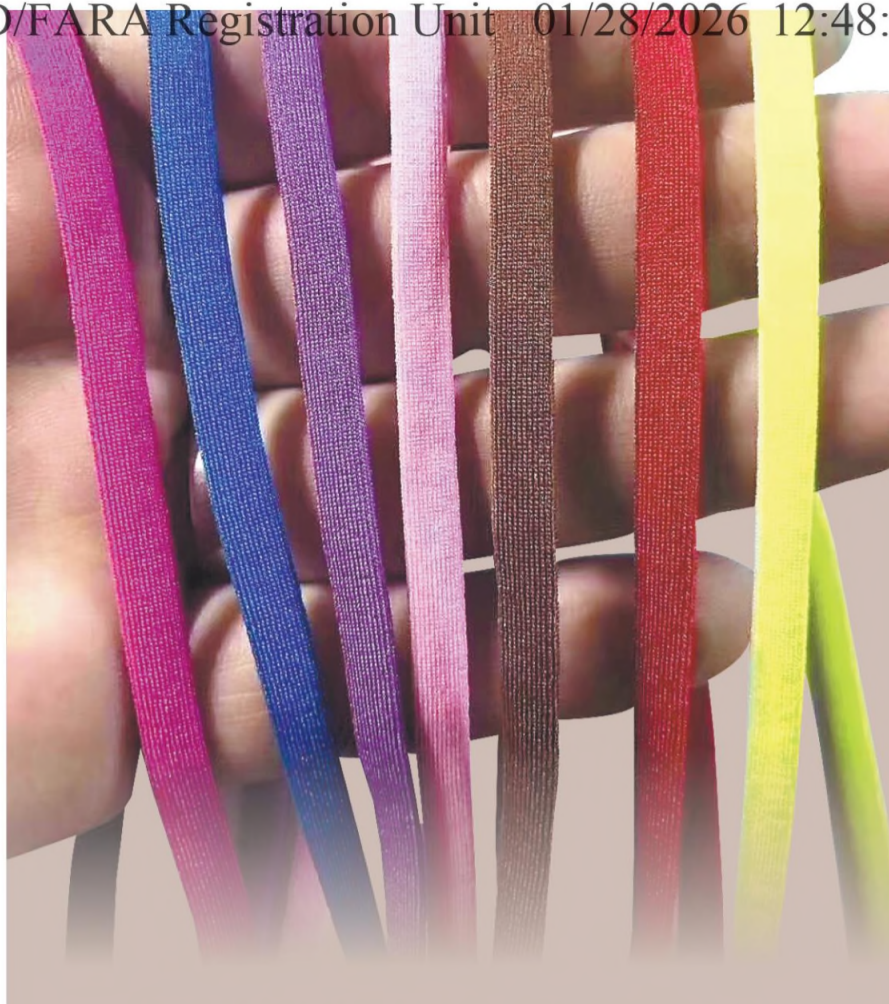
"Our raw materials — nylon, spandex, polypropylene, polyester and rayon — are all sourced externally. Our regular lace sells from a few cents to a few yuan per meter, with the highest around 3 to 4 yuan," Chen said.

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 his 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.

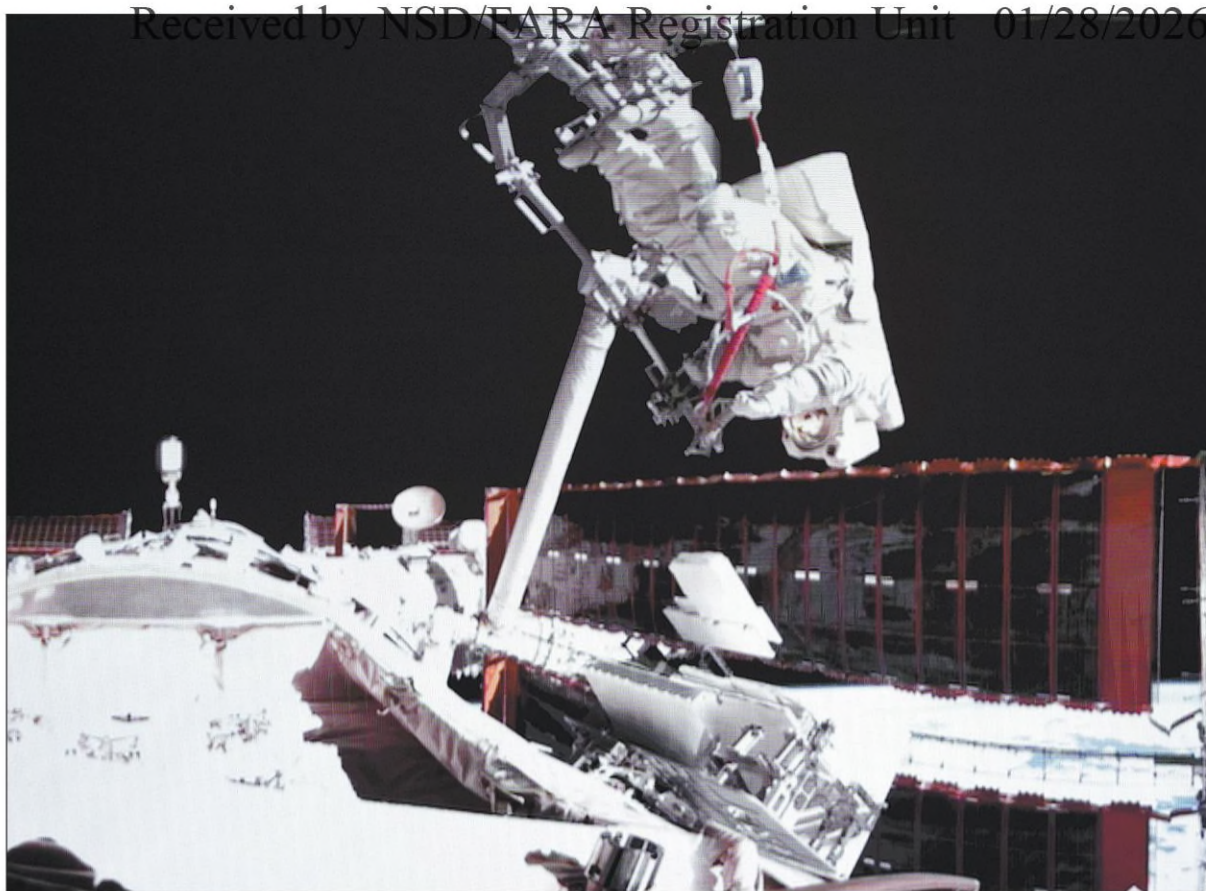
"Before, villagers had to buy their own equipment and worry about power and safety at home," Chen Jing said. "Now they just come in to work. The new machines are enclosed, and workers wear aprons and hats. Regular patrols ensure safety."

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

Astronauts carry out spacewalk

Shenzhou XX crew members completed vital tasks during 8-hour extravehicular mission

By ZHAO LEI
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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.

Biodiversity preservation success stories unveiled

By HOU LIQIANG
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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.



Online Scan the QR code for details.



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

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.

CHINA

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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
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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
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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
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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.

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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 comprehensively equipped volcanic 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.

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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

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 go 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.

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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
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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
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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."

Sino-Thai joint marine and polar studies urged

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
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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.



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

"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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The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

China-built water project revives Kenya's farmlands

By SHARON NAKOLA
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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."



Online
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An aerial view of the head works of the Chinese-built Lower Nzoia Irrigation Project. WANG YUXI / CHINA DAILY

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

UNITED STATES Jetliner accepted from Qatar as gift

The United States has accepted a luxury Boeing 747 jetliner as a gift

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 Minnie, premier of New South Wales.

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 Spill 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



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
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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

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
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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.

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Briefly

Zero-distance power services turn popular

Chinese power companies are working to expand zero-distance services for clients via intelligent cloud terminals. In the prefecture-level city of Xuzhou in Jiangsu province, employees from State Grid Xuzhou Power Supply Co installed such devices at convenient power service points established in each village and town throughout the city. The devices

allow users to easily check various electricity matters such as grid connections, repair issues, usage, fee inquiries, payments, bill printing and others, 24 hours a day without leaving the village.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 34 pips to 7.1903 against the US dollar on

Thursday, 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

Transfar enhances employee capability

By CHENG YU
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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.

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
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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

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.

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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 Mao 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

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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

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.

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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



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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.

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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 in the world. 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.

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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 nation a 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

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.

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LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

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



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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."

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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."

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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 trails really are 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 to get out and 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.

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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
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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.

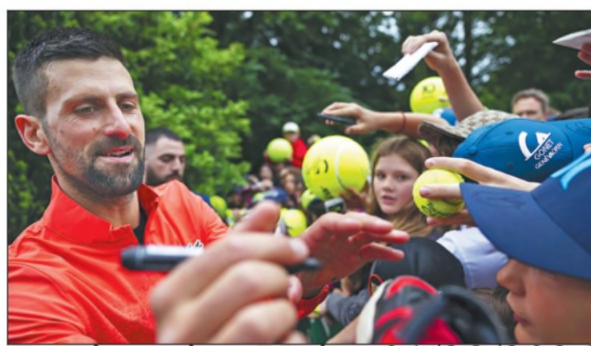
Djokovic has uncharacteristically lost six times already this year to players ranked outside the world's top 30.

"(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 may have lost both 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.

Fatal attack

Two Israeli embassy staffers shot dead in Washington, DC
WORLD, PAGE 9



Low-carbon lifestyles gain extra credit
GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



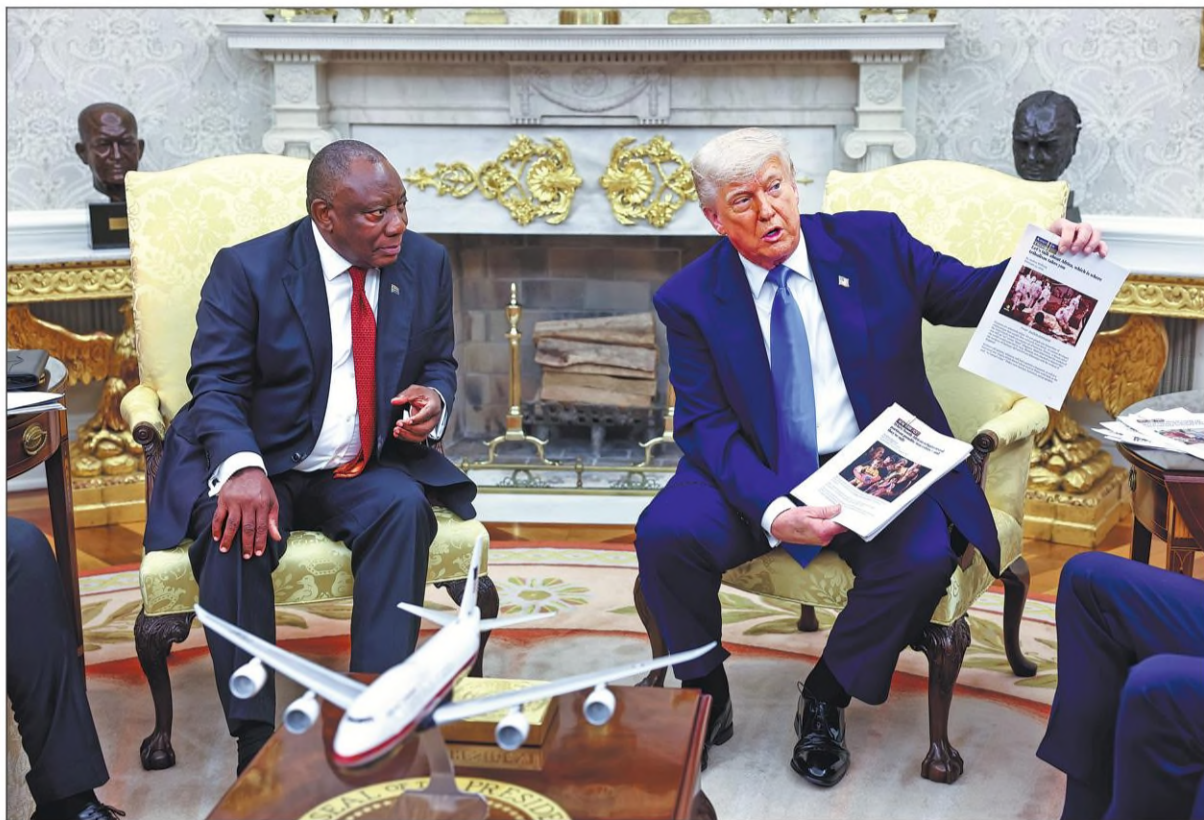
Courting battle

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 For-

eign 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
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President Xi Jinping has called on China and France to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, saying 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
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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.

White House press secretary's lace-trimmed red dress has unwittingly put the spotlight on a bustling small manufacturing hub in Zhejiang



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.

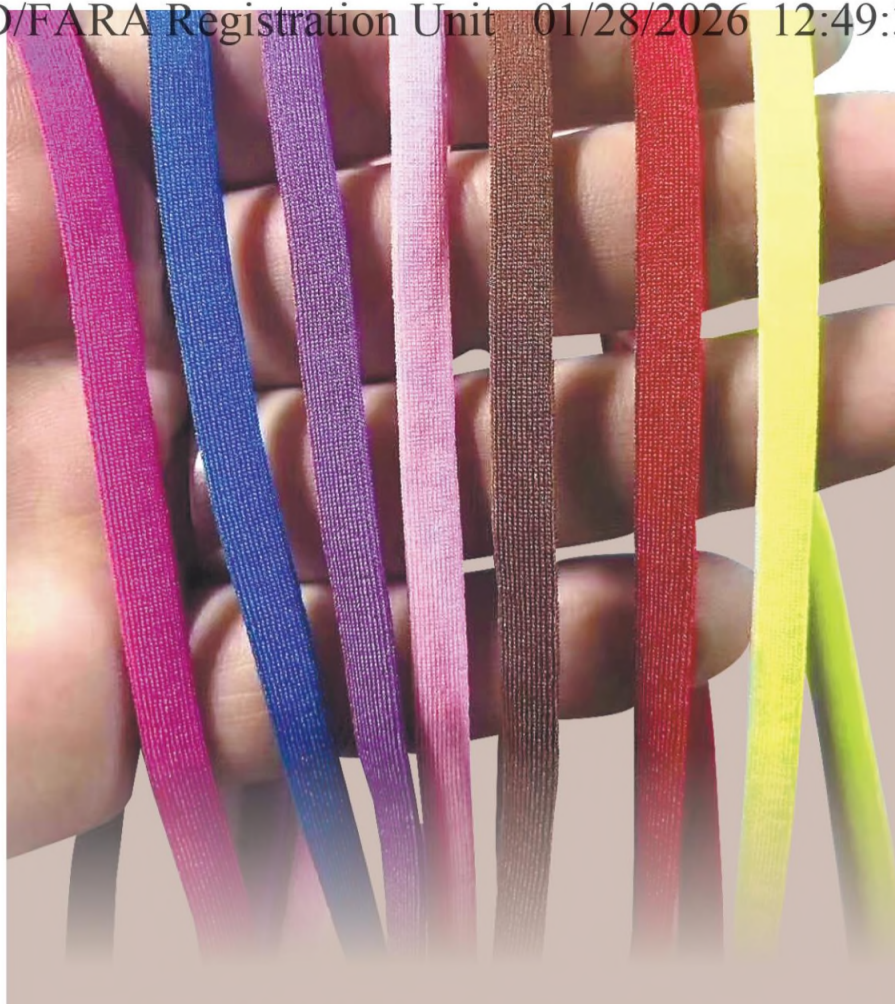
"Our raw materials — nylon, spandex, polypropylene, polyester and rayon — are all sourced externally. Our regular lace sells from a few cents to a few yuan per meter, with the highest around 3 to 4 yuan," Chen said.

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 his 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.

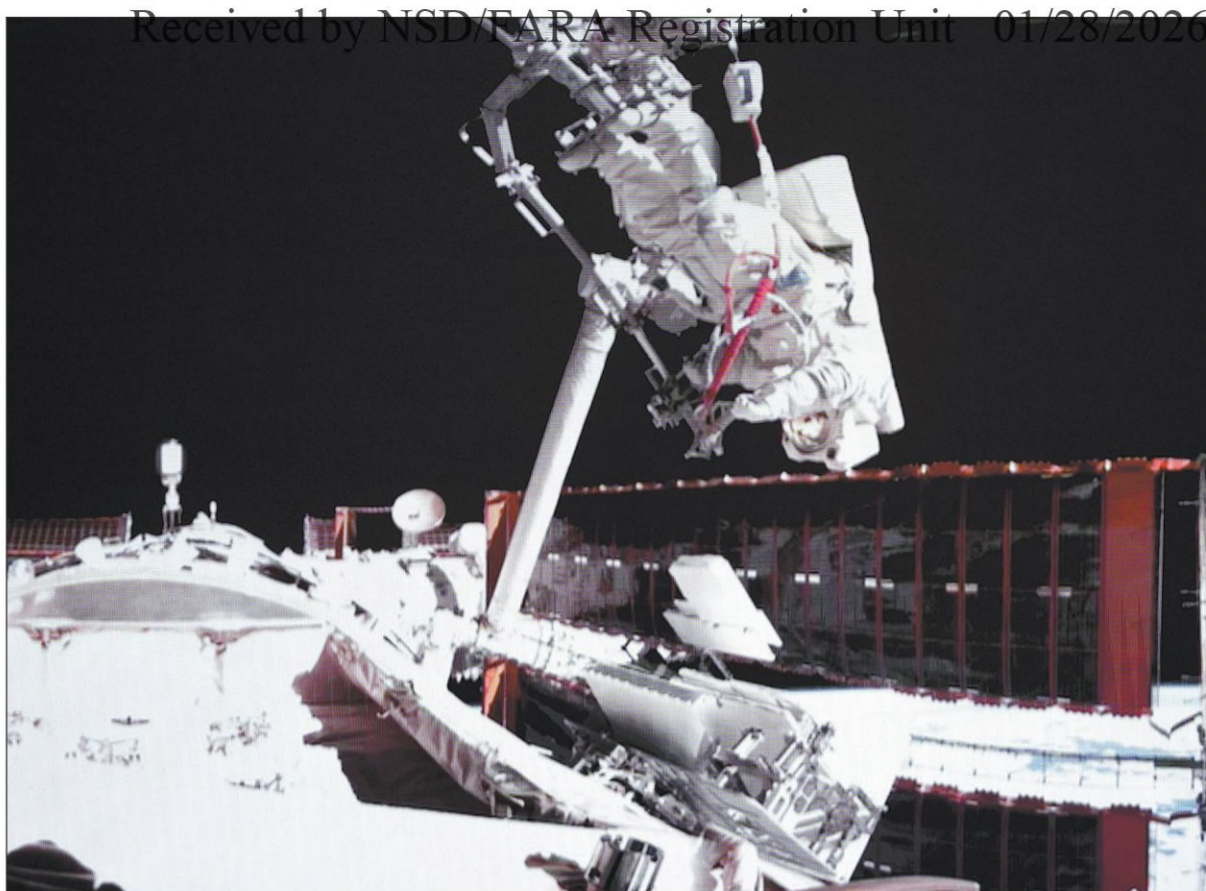
"Before, villagers had to buy their own equipment and worry about power and safety at home," Chen Jing said. "Now they just come in to work. The new machines are enclosed, and workers wear aprons and hats. Regular patrols ensure safety."

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

Astronauts carry out spacewalk

Shenzhou XX crew members completed vital tasks during 8-hour extravehicular mission

By ZHAO LEI
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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.

Biodiversity preservation success stories unveiled

By HOU LIQIANG
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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.

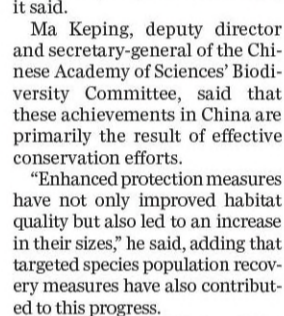
They also reported 1,723 new species of fungi, accounting for 48.5 percent of the global total, according to a media release from the committee.

"The progress underscores Chinese scientists' unwavering dedication to conducting increasingly thorough research endeavors," Ma said.

Li Menghan contributed to this story.

Online Scan the QR code for details.

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



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

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.

CHINA

Free care received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:49:30 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



Pumped storage expertise reaches global parity

By HOU LIQIANG in Chengdu
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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

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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

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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.

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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.

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."

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

conditions — 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 volcanic 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

XINHUA

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 comprehensively equipped volcanic 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."

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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.

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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 2125 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 problem 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 practice 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.

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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
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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
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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".

Sino-Thai joint marine and polar studies urged

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
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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.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

WORLD

China-built water project revives Kenya's farmlands

By SHARON NAKOLA
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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
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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.

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.

AUSTRALIA Floods leave over 50,000 stranded

Record floods stranded more than 50,000 people in eastern Australia

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
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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.

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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
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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
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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.

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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 Mao 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

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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.

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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.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



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Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and cycles in recent years. In-depth dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems in the world. 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.

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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 nation in a 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.

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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."

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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



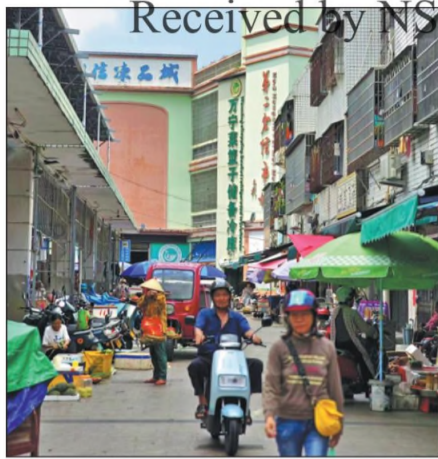
Above: A sculpture of the Pharaoh Akhenaten at the Shanghai Museum's groundbreaking exhibition *On Top of the Pyramid*. **Left below:** Mummy caskets on show at the exhibition. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY **Left:** Visitors ride camels in front of the Stepped Pyramid in Saqqara, Egypt, in May. 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-



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.

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.

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."

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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



Michael Rhys Card
Second Thoughts

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 offers 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.

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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
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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.

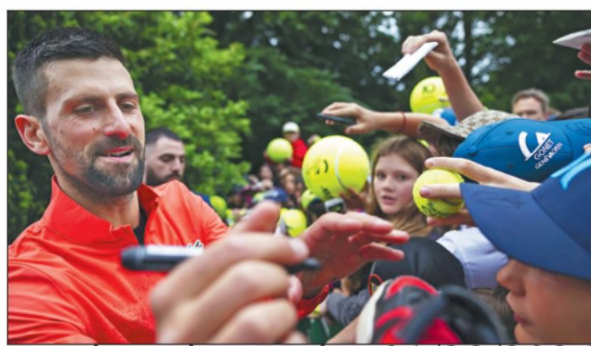
Djokovic has uncharacteristically lost six times already this year to players ranked outside the world's top 30.

"(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 turnaround 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 may have lost both 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.

On top of the world

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New York to host premiere of
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XI'S VISION | CULTURAL HERITAGE

Tracing origins of civilization makes strides

From first rice to emergence of cities, light shed on uncovering nation's earliest roots

By WANG RU
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In a single domesticated grain seed, one might see the bud of great civilizations.

The birth of agriculture was a turning point in humans' social development, as stable food supplies enabled people to transcend the constraints of food gained by hunting and gathering. After that, people were able to settle down and experience population booms.

As one of the major areas around the globe where agriculture originated, China has contributed to the world's domesticated rice, millet, buckwheat and soybeans. Archaeological studies have unveiled that the planting of rice originated around 10,000 years ago in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, leading to the eventual replacement there of hunting and gathering practices dating back 5,000 to 6,000 years.

"It marked the formation of a rice-based agricultural society in the area," said Zhao Zhijun, an archaeologist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Archaeological studies of the origins of rice-based agriculture are an important part of a national project tracing the origins of Chinese civilization itself. President Xi Jinping has greatly valued the project.

At a group study session of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on May 27, 2022, Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, emphasized the significance of the project and the role that archaeological studies play in better understanding Chinese civilization.

The project to trace the origins of Chinese civilization, in addition to finding signs of human activity more than 1 million years ago, has also proved that China's history includes 10,000 years of culture and more than 5,000 years of civilization.

The project has provided clear knowledge of the origins and formation of Chinese civilization, the history of its development, the process of the formation and development of its pluralistic and integrated pattern, and the characteristics of the civilization and why it was formed in such a way, he added.

This was not the first time that Xi emphasized the importance of the origin-tracing project. Since

the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, Xi has toured more than 100 historical and cultural locations and issued many instructions related to archaeology and the origin-tracing project.

During the 23rd group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in 2020, Xi called for giving more attention to archaeological research and letting historical facts speak for themselves.

"This will provide strong support for our efforts to carry forward the best of traditional Chinese culture and increase our cultural confidence," said Xi.

The origin-tracing project has been carried out since 2002. Its ongoing fifth phase, which started in 2020, involves the participation of more than 500 researchers from 29 institutes across the country.

It primarily centers on several ancient capital sites, including the Liangzhu site in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, the Taosi site in Xiangfen county, Shanxi province, the Shimao site in Shennu, Shaanxi province, and the Erlitou site in Luoyang, Henan province, from 3,500 to 5,500 years ago, as well as other settlements mainly along the basins of the Yellow, Yangtze and Liaohe rivers.

The project has also expanded to a wider geographic and chronological framework to decode how Chinese civilization emerged and how its diverse elements formed a unity.

Excavation of the Liangzhu site, which is over 5,000 years old and is one of the major sites covered in the origin-tracing project, has yielded an inner city covering 3 million square meters and an outer city of 6.3 million sq m, making it the world's largest capital at the time. It also had a giant water control system, which contributed to the formation of a rice-based agricultural society.

By calculating the earthwork volume, archaeologists found that building the entire ancient city, the water control system and Mojiashan — a 10-meter-tall man-made terrace in the center of the city — required 10,000 people working daily for seven-and-a-half years.

Wang Wei, a veteran archaeologist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the discoveries show that Liangzhu had a kingship able to organize people for large-scale public construction.

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Saving rhinos



Members of the Kenya Wildlife Service and veterinary teams on Saturday capture a black rhino at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in central Kenya's Laikipia County to translocate it to the Segera Conservancy. A total of 21 critically endangered black rhinos will be translocated to establish a new breeding population.

DANIEL IRUNGU / EPA-EFE

Xi extends condolences over death of former Vietnamese leader

President Xi Jinping extended condolences on Saturday to General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee To Lam and Vietnamese President Luong Cuong over the death of former Vietnamese president Tran Duc Luong.

In his message, Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist

Party of China Central Committee, expressed profound condolences and extended sincere sympathies to Tran Duc Luong's family on behalf of the CPC, the Chinese government and the Chinese people.

Xi hailed Comrade Tran Duc Luong as an outstanding party and state leader of Vietnam who made

important contributions to the country's development and its cause of *Doi Moi* (reform).

As an old friend of the Chinese people, Comrade Tran Duc Luong made unremitting efforts to promote the development of relations between the two parties and the two countries, he said.

Xi expressed his belief that

under the strong leadership of the CPV Central Committee headed by Comrade To Lam, the party, the government and the people of Vietnam will surely turn their grief into strength and continue to achieve new accomplishments in the cause of socialist construction.

XINHUA

Lucky to be free



Freed Ukrainians return home on Friday after a major exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine. The two nations agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners of war each during a meeting in Turkey's Istanbul on May 16. The two sides exchanged 390 soldiers and civilians in the first phase on Friday, and 307 of their service personnel during Saturday's second phase. PETER DRUK / XINHUA See story, page 7

China, Africa benefit from sharing governance experience

As the world navigates the complexities of development in the 21st century, the relationship between China and Africa continues to evolve as a powerful example of South-South cooperation. Both regions face pressing challenges — ranging from poverty eradication to sustainable growth — but also share a deep commitment to building equitable and resilient societies. In this context, governance becomes a cornerstone of progress.

The exchange of governance experience between China and Africa, therefore, is important. It is an exchange rooted in mutual learning, respect and a shared commitment to achieving sustainable and equitable development. Through such exchanges, African countries can forge a future where moderni-

WORLD WATCH By Elia G. Kaiyamo

zation delivers not just economic growth, but also social justice, environmental sustainability and peace.

Modernization is a complex journey, unique to each nation's historical, cultural and socioeconomic context. However, beneath these differences lies a universal aspiration: to improve people's livelihood, eradicate poverty and build a resilient society.

China's remarkable transformation over the past decades offers invaluable lessons for African countries. Its experience demonstrates that modernization is not merely about rapid economic growth but also about fos-

tering social equity, institutional reform and good governance.

Mutual learning entails a two-way exchange. African nations offer unique insights rooted in indigenous knowledge, community-driven approaches and resilience, enriching China's development understanding. The African Union's Agenda 2063, for instance, exemplifies successful continentwide planning for inclusive and sustainable progress. Conversely, China's governance strategies, from poverty alleviation to infrastructure financing, provide a valuable blueprint for Africa's equitable advancement.

We must foster open dialogue among policymakers, scholars and civil society, sharing successes and challenges transparently. This

deepens our understanding of governance models that balance economic growth with social justice, ensuring modernization truly benefits all, especially the marginalized.

In an interconnected world, no country modernizes in isolation. China's Global Development Initiative embodies this truth, calling for collective effort, shared resources and mutual benefit to accelerate development. African nations, facing diverse challenges, stand to benefit immensely from active participation in the GDI. Aligning our strategies allows us to leverage Chinese experience and investment for infrastructure, health systems, education and sustainable industries.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT HARVARD FACING UNCERTAIN ACADEMIC PROSPECTS

Ending visitor program raises fears of wider damage to education system in the United States

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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Fangzhou Jiang, a graduate student at the Harvard Kennedy School, had quite an emotional roller-coaster ride between the Trump administration's barring of all international students from attending Harvard University on Thursday and a court ruling to halt the decision the next day.

The Department of Homeland Security announcement said that "Noem demanded Harvard provide information about the criminality and misconduct of foreign students on its campus" and "Harvard University brazenly refused to provide the required information requested and ignored a follow-up request?"

In-depth

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Speaking to China Daily minutes after the court ruling on Friday, Jiang, co-founder of Crimson Education, an education agency helping students navigate the admission process of US universities, said he was shocked when he found out the news was real.

"I saw this news at 2 pm in the afternoon. My first reaction was, this can't be true. I thought it was a rumor or fake news," he said. Jiang has had a few "putting of war" encounters with the United States government in recent months, but Jiang thought the fight was over, as the government's withholding of funds from the Ivy League university had already been "quite impactful".

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PAGE TWO



Harvard: Fighting for academic freedom

A view of the Business School campus of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the United States. FAITH NINIVAGGI / REUTERS

From page 1

The Trump administration has frozen billions of federal funding to Harvard and opened an investigation into how it has handled antisemitism. In April, Harvard sued the administration over the funding.

"Then suddenly came this big news that we can't attend Harvard anymore," Jiang said. "All international students were given no time to prepare for this. It's quite shocking. Many of us felt angry, helpless and lost because US immigration law is very strict about legal status."

As Harvard didn't immediately issue any instructions to international students following the government's announcement, Jiang said many were panicking. However, he said he understands the university's position as it's such a big issue, and Harvard's leadership needs time to decide what to do.

University President Alan Garber issued a statement to the Harvard community on Friday morning condemning "this unlawful and unwarranted action".

"It imperils the futures of thousands of students and scholars across Harvard and serves as a warning to countless others at colleges and universities throughout the country who have come to America to pursue their education and fulfill their dreams," he said.

Garber refuted the DHS' claim the university had failed to comply with requests for information. "In fact, Harvard did respond to the department's requests as required by law," he said.

He also gave assurances to international students and scholars affected by the government's actions. "We will support you as we do our utmost to ensure that Harvard remains open to the world," he said.

Legal challenge

On Friday, Federal judge Allison Burroughs in Boston blocked the Trump administration from cutting off Harvard's enrollment of foreign students. In a lawsuit filed earlier the same day, Harvard said the government's action violates the US First Amendment and will have an "immediate and devastating effect for Harvard and more than 7,000 visa holders". Burroughs' decision puts the sanction against Harvard on hold, pending the lawsuit.

Jiang said he and many international students were relieved by the court's decision but remained "cautious".

"The administration might not abide by the court's decision. The situation is chaotic and the future is uncertain," he said, adding he doesn't know whether he will be able to attend Harvard campus this fall to complete his master's degree in public administration.

However, Jiang believes the US government is using this as a bargaining chip and doesn't intend to "totally cripple Harvard" or extend the decision to other universities.

Still, the situation is creating

uncertainty, anxiety, panic and problems, he said.

Many international students believe it's too soon to determine their next steps amid the shifting legal landscape, according to The Harvard Crimson, a campus newspaper.

The White House instructed students to transfer to another university "or lose their legal status", but deadlines for transfer applications to most other universities have long passed. Suggestions for Harvard's "studying abroad" program or "remote learning" have been floated online. Most international students said they were waiting for official guidance from Harvard officials.

For some, the situation is potentially life-altering. One student posted on Reddit that he sacrificed a lot to get admitted to Harvard in the fall. He said he turned down an offer to work as a doctor in August, withdrew his medical license, and paid "thousands" including for the course deposit, housing deposit and airfare to the US.

"This is an absurd dystopian irl (in real life) nightmare," the poster wrote. "I truly cannot believe this is happening."

Big blow to education

Academics and members of the public have voiced concerns the Trump administration's actions are damaging the wider US higher education system.

"The president is risking a higher education catastrophe," Anthony Moretti, an associate professor at the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership of Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, told China Daily.

"It's one thing if universities see a drop in the number of international students, but it's quite another if the doors of entry are closed. And while it's easy to say that the president might not issue a similar order for another university or two, the reality is the universities will be on unsteady ground."

Sally Kornbluth, Massachusetts Institute of Technology president, said in a statement to the MIT community on Thursday: "I write to you in profound disbelief. The action the federal government took today to bar Harvard from having international students is devastating for American excellence, openness and ingenuity."

In a post on the news site of The New York Times, which was recommended over 5,600 times, reader Peter Smallbach wrote: "Call me naive, but it's still amazing to me that the administration is willing to pull down one of the real pillars of American strength — its colleges and universities, envied around the world — in order to provide ideological conformity. How anyone can think the result of this will actually make America 'great again' is beyond me."

A post on the social network Reddit said: "(This will) reduce the international standing of one of the US' most respected universities and cause a reverse brain drain, because seriously



Above left: A Harvard Faculty member holds a sign after a rally to support international students and academic freedom on April 17. JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP

Above: Students walk on the campus of Harvard University. FAITH NINIVAGGI / REUTERS

Left: Students, faculty and members of the Harvard University community rally on Thursday. AP

“It imperils the futures of thousands of students and scholars across Harvard and serves as a warning to countless others at colleges and universities throughout the country who have come to America to pursue their education and fulfill their dreams.”

Alan Garber,
president of Harvard University

what bright up-and-coming young mind is going to want to risk going to an American university now?"

If the administration succeeds in barring international students from Harvard, the Ivy League school will suffer a huge financial impact as about a quarter of its student body is made up of international students, who generate hundreds of millions of dollars for the school.

Moretti said a decline in international students will be especially

difficult for smaller universities as they are dependent on tuition fees. International students pay more, so the bottom lines of many colleges and universities will take a beating should fewer international students choose to come to the US, he said.

Moretti added while it's easy for people to think the courts will overrule the president, who then might back down, the damage to the US, and international students' worries about being able to enter and stay in the country will linger.

Higher education is one of the few areas where the US is enjoying a "trade surplus", some observers pointed out. International students reportedly contributed \$44 billion to the US economy last school year.

"The US has had two industries that have consistently run trade surpluses — tourism and education — and Trump's policies are destroying both," said a post on the NYT site. "Someone explains this to me. It's beyond my understanding."

There are voices, however, supporting the government's actions. Some view fewer international students as a "win", meaning more opportunities for US students and helping achieve the goal of "America first".

Others see Harvard's welcoming of international students to attract top academic talents as "anti-American".

"Why does Harvard have 25 percent of students from foreign countries. Why not tap more of the talent

we are producing right here in our own country. Start being pro-American," one reader commented on a Wall Street Journal report.

"I guess Harvard will get to show the courage of their convictions to the full extent. They are free to import all the antisemitic, radical leftist Nobel laureates and scientists they want on their own dime, with no support from the US taxpayer. Over time, patriotic Americans will stop sending their kids too," wrote WSJ reader Mel Everheart.

"I say stop all student visas for 3 years and monitor the results. After that, create policies," wrote Steven Cohan.

"No sympathy for Harvard. Like many of our 'elite' schools — Harvard has imported and promoted the very teachings that are now ripping our educational system apart. Being in America is a gift, evidently many, especially those at Harvard have forgotten this fact," commented Joshua Mervis on WSJ.

Jewish concerns

Since Trump took office, his administration has been pressuring colleges by citing "antisemitism". Yet, some Jewish Americans are concerned that antisemitism is being used by the US government to attack colleges.

"I support Garber and Harvard's vigorous defense of its academic freedom and integrity. At heart this is a battle for democracy itself,

being waged all across the country," a reader named Daniel posted on the NYT site.

"But as a Jewish faculty member, I must say that Harvard has strengthened Trump's hand by conceding to a fundamental falsehood: that protests against the war in Gaza are antisemitic and should be punished," he wrote.

"One student, an elected officer of the graduating class, described a 'climate of fear' against saying anything about the war or killing of children, because of Harvard's heavy-handed punishment of protesters. The irony is that most Jews at Harvard bitterly oppose the war. By claiming that anti-war protest is antisemitic, both Trump and Garber slander the Jewish population, by making this horrible war 'our war'. In our fight against Trump, we need to defend Harvard's founding principle: *veritas* (truth). It is not antisemitic to protest against this war."

Another NYT reader posted that "whatever one's views on Israel-Palestine, that issue should be debated freely and openly in the US" and "silencing — even deporting! — dissenting voices is unwise and profoundly un-American."

Before he left Yale University to teach in Canada in late March — citing the US political climate as the primary reason — Jewish philosophy professor Jason Stanley told the Public Broadcasting Service that the Trump administration's efforts to fight antisemitism on college campuses are actually "reinforcing antisemitic tropes all across the political spectrum".

Stanley said it's the first time in his life that he's fearful not because of the protests on campus, which had a lot of Jewish students participating in them, but because Jewish people are suddenly "at the center of US politics" and "we are being used to destroy democracy."

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TOP NEWS

RCEP set to stabilize world trading system

By WANG KEJU in Haikou
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The advancement of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement to a higher level and toward broader coverage will bolster economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region and help stabilize a fracturing world trade system, officials and experts said on Sunday.

The mega trade pact, covering 30 percent of the world's total population and economic output, should play an even more significant role in championing free trade and mutual benefits as headwinds buffet the global economy, they said at the 2025 RCEP Media and Think Tank Forum held in Haikou, Hainan province.

The forum, themed "Jointly Building High-Level and Largest Free Trade Area", was organized by China Daily, the China Institute for Reform and Development and the China Oceanic Development Foundation.

"Unilateral protectionism and hegemonic bullying are wreaking havoc worldwide," said Hainan Governor Liu Xiaoming. "Yet the RCEP is injecting robust momentum into the economic integration of the Asia-Pacific, presenting member states with new market opportunities and bolstering the international community's confidence in multilateralism."

Hainan, as a free trade port, will fully leverage its existing policies to integrate with the rules of the RCEP, Liu said, adding that the province will turn itself into a crucial hub that facilitates market connectivity, production factor mobility, rule coordination and industrial chain cooperation between China and other RCEP member economies.

"In the face of an increasingly uncertain and volatile global landscape, the steady progress of RCEP implementation has become even more precious," said Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily.

"Redoubling our efforts to push forward regional integration and economic globalization is essential for shaping a community with a shared future for mankind," Qu said, adding that the RCEP member economies should work together to build a regional community for scientific and technological innovation.

Harnessing the synergies of artificial intelligence-enabled joint research and cooperative networks among RCEP members will greatly enhance the collective capacity for innovation and smart development, he said.

The RCEP — the world's largest free trade pact, which is aimed at gradually eliminating tariffs on over 90 percent of goods traded among its 15 members — serves as a critical counterweight to the United States' blanket tariff hikes targeting global economies.

Last year, the total trade volume among RCEP members reached \$5.7 trillion, up 2.5 percent year-on-year, according to a report released at the forum.

China, as a key player of the

Looking ahead, an RCEP with higher standards, a broader scope and more inclusive development will surely inject certainty into the global economy."

Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development

RCEP, has been making cutting-edge AI capabilities available both domestically and globally, with DeepSeek, a cost-effective and open-source large language model developed at a mere fraction of the cost of comparable US models, being a prime example.

"Looking ahead, an RCEP with higher standards, a broader scope and more inclusive development will surely inject certainty into the global economy," said Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development.

At present, the RCEP comprises the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Sri Lanka and Chile have submitted applications seeking accession to the RCEP.

Chi said that Hong Kong's accession would not only boost growth of regional trade, but also drive regional financial development and enhance the internationalization of regional industries. If Chile joins the group, it would mark an upgrade of the RCEP from a purely regional arrangement to a cross-regional one, he added.

Secretary-General of ASEAN Kao Kim Hourn said, "The growing interest from potential applicant countries and regions represents a powerful testament to our commitment to maintaining an open and inclusive agreement."

He added that relevant parties are working diligently to finalize the details of the accession process as expeditiously as possible.

Meanwhile, the full completion of negotiations on the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and the accelerating negotiations for the China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement are also converging to open up more opportunities for regional growth.

Lyu Bin, president of the China Oceanic Development Foundation, called for efforts to construct a platform for cooperation on the blue, or marine economy, helping RCEP member nations to identify their comparative resource advantages and optimize the layout of their marine industries.

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Chinese Premier Li Qiang (second from left) and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto (second from right) attend a signing ceremony for bilateral cooperation documents on Sunday in Jakarta, Indonesia.
WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

China, Indonesia pledge to enhance cooperation

Countries support multilateralism and oppose protectionism amid global risks, challenges

By WANG QINGYUN
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China and Indonesia vowed to further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation amid ongoing major changes in the world, as Premier Li Qiang met with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta on Sunday.

Li, who arrived on Saturday for a three-day official visit to the Southeast Asian nation, told Prabowo during their talks that China hopes to work together with Indonesia to strengthen solidarity and collaboration and jointly address risks and challenges.

Noting that China and Indonesia are good neighbors and good partners, Li said the two countries have supported each other and stood by each other since the establishment of diplomatic relations 75 years ago, and their traditional friendship has become stronger than ever.

China stands ready to continue its friendship with Indonesia, consolidate cooperation on the "five pillars" of politics, economy, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, maritime affairs, and security, and to elevate political mutual trust and strategic coordination between the two countries to a higher level, he said.

China is willing to work with Indonesia to enhance the alignment of their development strategies and deepen high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, especially by optimiz-

ing and strengthening landmark projects, Li said.

He encouraged the two countries to further enhance the "golden brand" of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, and promote the construction of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Corridor and the "Two Countries, Twin Parks" project.

Li called on the two countries to strengthen connectivity of markets and coordination of industries, make bilateral trade and investment more convenient, and broaden cooperation in the fields of finance, new energy, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, among others.

China is willing to expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges with Indonesia, facilitate cross-border travel, and deepen cooperation in the fields of food, agriculture, poverty reduction and health, in order to bring more benefits to the two peoples, he said.

Noting that the rise of unilateralism and protectionism has had a serious impact on the international economic and trade order, Li said that China hopes to work with Indonesia and other developing nations to uphold multilateralism and free trade, and promote peace, stability and development in the region and the world at large.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of China-Indonesia diplomatic relations, as well as the 70th anni-

versary of the Bandung Conference, which was held in the Indonesian city of Bandung in 1955 and brought together delegates from 29 Asian and African countries.

Prabowo said that Indonesia will take the anniversaries as an opportunity to deepen its comprehensive strategic partnership with China, advance the construction of the China-Indonesia community with a shared future, and promote peace and development in Asia and the world.

Indonesia has high regard for the progress made in bilateral cooperation and hopes to deepen cooperation in agriculture, finance, infrastructure and other fields, he said, adding that his country welcomes more Chinese investment.

Prabowo said that Indonesia is willing to work with China to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea and looks forward to cooperating more closely with China under multilateral platforms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and BRICS.

After their meeting on Sunday, Li and Prabowo witnessed the signing of several bilateral cooperation documents.

On Saturday evening, they attended and addressed a reception that brought together about 200 representatives from the business community in China and Indonesia.

Calling on businesses in both countries to expand and strengthen cooperation, Li said that China will share growth opportunities with Indonesia and other countries, and will remain committed to opening up wider to the outside world.

Exchanges: Well-being of people is top priority

From page 1

This joint approach champions openness — embracing investment, technology transfer and policy dialogue — and a win-win mindset, where China and Africa are equal stakeholders in development and growth. Through tailored solutions and collaborative implementation, we accelerate progress while reinforcing solidarity, respect and shared prosperity.

Crucially, modernization must be people-centered. Its true success is measured by the well-being, dignity and participation of citizens. China's remarkable story highlights that it prioritizes people's needs: lifting millions from poverty, expanding education and improving healthcare. African countries, with their rich cultural diversity, have much to contribute to this dialogue. They must champion inclusive development that benefits women, youth, indigenous peoples and marginalized groups. Deepening exchanges among our civilizations and cultures serves as a powerful catalyst for mutual understanding, dispelling stereotypes and building bridges. Modernization that excludes any group undermines its own sustainability.

Finally, modernization demands a peaceful and sustainable path. Global challenges such as climate change and resource depletion necessitate eco-friendly practices. China's experience in balancing rapid growth with environmental sustainability offers valuable lessons for Africa in integrating protection, promoting renewables and fostering green technologies. Equally vital are peace and security. Political stability and social cohesion attract investment, enable reforms and improve livelihood. China's insights into social harmony and conflict resolution through dialogue can benefit African countries striving for stability. Sharing experience in conflict prevention, peace-building and environmental management ensures modernization advances in harmony with nature and society — a future that is peaceful, secure and sustainable.

Namibia deeply values its cooperation with China, a bond forged long before its independence in 1990. China, under Chairman Mao Zedong, offered the South West Africa People's Organisation Party of Namibia and its first president Sam Nujoma vital support, including diplomatic recognition and aid. In turn, independent Namibia swiftly endorsed the one-China principle, providing solidarity and resources during China's late leader Deng Xiaoping's reform era. This profound historical tie underpins our strong political relations and extensive cooperation, fostering win-win economic engagement in infrastructure, mining and development, all rooted in shared history and mutual respect.

The journey to modernization, for both China and Africa, thrives on mutual learning and shared experiences. Our relationship exemplifies the power of solidarity, cooperation and respect for diverse development pathways. As Africa draws inspiration from China's progress, adapting strategies to its unique contexts, China can, in turn, deepen its understanding of Africa's rich cultures and indigenous knowledge, ensuring a truly reciprocal exchange.

This path, despite being challenging, echoes the spirit of China's Long March: a testament to unwavering determination, strategic wisdom and collective effort in overcoming obstacles.

Together, through shared governance experience and initiatives like the GDI, we can build a future of just and equitable development, win-win cooperation, inclusive progress and sustainable peace. Our collective efforts will contribute to a more prosperous, harmonious and sustainable world.

The author is ambassador of Namibia to China. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Cannes honor



Chinese director Bi Gan poses during a photocall on Saturday after the closing ceremony of the 78th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France. Bi won the Special Award for his epic fiction feature *Resurrection*. STEPHANE MAHE / REUTERS

From page 1

Social differentiation, emergence of the city concept and existence of a kingship prove that it became a civilized society, Wang added.

Significant topic

Wang said that tracing the origins of a civilization is a significant topic in the research of human history. Over the years, the Chinese project has provided China's answer to how to define civilizations.

In 2022, Xi commended the efforts and stressed that the project has made creative contributions to the research on tracing the origins of the world's civilizations.

Wang said: "International academia has proposed three indispensable elements for a civilized society based on features of Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations: written characters, metallurgy and the city concept. But we can find that some of the three elements were absent in many ancient civilizations. For example, the Mayan civilization had no metallurgy, while the Incan civilization didn't have written characters."

Western scholars believe that Chinese civilization began with the YinXu Ruins in Anyang, Henan province, a capital of the late Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), based on the discovery of

inscribed oracle bones from that time. However, Chinese archaeologists don't agree.

With continued archaeological research, international academia now believes that places around the world can propose criteria for civilization based on their own ancient social development.

China's archaeological studies have shaped the nation's criteria in defining a civilization: the development of productivity, an increase in population, the appearance of cities, social differentiation and the emergence of kingship and state.

"These criteria are suitable for identifying other civilizations as well," said Wang. "Civilizations have in common the appearance of kingship and state. They are only different in the ways of imposing kingship and the forms of state."

In China, kingship and state "were shown by exquisite jade and bronze ritual artifacts, grand palaces and magnificent mausoleums imitating aboveground palaces", he added. "In Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, they were demonstrated through superb stone temples, pyramids and large-scale tombs."

Multidisciplinary subject

President Xi said in 2020 that archaeologists should work closely with researchers from other fields to

make an interpretive analysis of material remains.

Zhang Chi, a professor of archaeology at Peking University, said that since material remains are often the research focus of archaeological studies, these should not only be observed with the eyes, but also studied using scientific and technological tools. Therefore, from the perspective of research methods, archaeology is by nature a multidisciplinary subject, Zhang added.

Wang, the CASS archaeologist, highlighted the application in archaeology of strontium isotope analysis, which determines the geographic origin of individuals by analyzing the ratio of different strontium isotopes found in their remains. Using this approach, researchers can determine whether humans whose remains they study stayed in the same place from birth to death or migrated to the place where they eventually were buried.

The technology has been applied in studies of the Erlitou site, widely believed to be a late capital of the Xia Dynasty (c.21st century-16th century BC), enabling researchers to confirm that the site had a large number of migrants.

Wang said the technology can support scholars' understanding of Erlitou's role as a capital that attracted people from other places.

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CHINA

Editor's note: China Daily Daily measured Qomolangma, the world's tallest peak, and Mount Everest, for the first time on May 27, 2020. Fifty years on, we dedicate this page to generations of mountaineers and scientists, who inspire the world with their incredible resilience and bravery in pursuing the spirit of science under extreme conditions.

Father, son reach highest peak for survey mission

By LI PEIXUAN

Father and son duo, Chen Gang and Chen Lihao summited Mount Qomolangma on April 30, 2022, completing a pioneering survey mission.

Chen Gang, a professor engaged in crustal movement research at the China University of Geosciences (Wuhan), has scaled Qomolangma four times in the past decade, including on the 2020 China-Nepal joint survey that determined the peak's current height of 8,848.86 meters.

His son, Chen Lihao, born in 2001, grew up shadowing his father on surveying trips, sparking a passion for the field. Now a doctoral candidate in surveying, Chen Lihao has inherited his father's love for science, carrying forward the spirit of exploration and professional expertise in surveying and mapping.

At 11:35 am on April 30, 2022, the father and son team stood together atop the summit of Mount Qomolangma and used two sets of China's domestically developed Beidou global navigation and positioning system devices to conduct high-precision real-time dynamic measurements and data comparisons of the summit. Later, they performed snow and ice depth detection experiments.

During their climb, they collected a large number of ice and snow samples, as well as plant and rock specimens, providing research materials for many disciplines.

Over the years, the father and son have summited multiple high mountains together.

Since 2019, they'd trained rigorously for their Qomolangma ascent — honing physical endurance, mastering ice-climbing techniques and perfecting surveying protocols.

With other team members focused solely on climbing, Chen Gang had to teach his son how to operate equipment and conduct surveys at a training base simulating Qomolangma's environment. "Despite harsh conditions, he never complained," Chen Gang said.

Chen Gang told his son he would hand over the task to him if he failed — and Chen Lihao always responded with supportive actions, not just words. "He became my only partner," Chen Gang said.

However, the enthusiasm and folly of youth would lead to hardship on their journey.

Reflecting on their differing approaches during the historic climb, Chen Gang said, "Like all beginners, he was fearless, charging ahead but often ignoring risks —

while I, like an experienced driver, prioritized caution and safety.

"I was prepared to turn back if needed — there will always be another chance to climb. But he was determined to succeed on the first try, fueled by his energy and resolve," Chen Gang added.

During the climb, Chen Lihao's youthful energy often outpaced the team.

"I worried about him constantly, so I tried to catch up and keep an eye on him," Chen Gang said.

Inevitably, Chen Lihao reached the summit first among all the team members, swiftly conducting measurements, with Chen Gang arriving later to jointly create the legend of a father-son team summiting Qomolangma.

However, the triumph nearly turned tragedy on the descent.

At 8,700 meters, Chen Gang tripped on a rope, leaving him dangling perilously over a cliff. "Luckily, my ice pick caught the rope — otherwise, I wouldn't be here," he said.

A guide, about 20 meters ahead of Chen Gang, hearing the whump, froze in shock before Chen Gang shouted for help.

"The wait felt endless — every second was agony," he said. Traversing the icy slope in crampons made the guide's rescue painfully slow.

After rescuing Chen Gang, the guide reproached him for his rushed descent.

"I was hurrying to catch up with my son, who reached the summit and began his descent 40 minutes ahead of me," Chen Gang said.

Each climber is allowed a maximum of one hour at the summit to complete their tasks because of the dangerously low oxygen levels and extreme conditions, according to Chen Gang.

Chen Lihao descended right when his time was up. To gather as much data as possible, Chen Gang stayed behind to continue his measurements.

"With our radios out of battery and him descending too quickly for me to keep in sight, I grew increasingly nervous — the descent is much more dangerous than the ascent."

Chasing his son for five hours, bypassing two camps without stopping, Chen Gang finally found his son asleep at the third camp past midnight in complete darkness.

"I felt so reassured seeing him safely asleep," the father said, despite his hasty descent leaving him freezing and exhausted.

The next day, they reached the foot of the mountain together and set off for home.



Clockwise from left: People attend a flag-raising ceremony during the 1960 ascent of Mount Qomolangma at its base camp. It was the first successful ascent of the world's tallest peak from its northern slope. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Mountaineers climb a steep and snowy slope at an altitude of about 8,000 meters during their attempt to summit Qomolangma in 1960. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Snow peaks can be seen below mountaineers as they climb up the northern slope of Qomolangma. XINHUA



The struggle to stand on top of the world

First summit of Qomolangma's north slope still carries weight 65 years on

By LI PEIXUAN

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On May 25, 1960, three Chinese mountaineers summited Mount Qomolangma via the north slope, marking the first successful north-side ascent of the world's tallest mountain, also known as Mount Everest.

The idea of climbing Qomolangma was first proposed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union, according to Yuan Fudong, deputy director of the industrial development department at the mountaineering management center of the General Administration of Sport of China.

At the time, the Soviet Union had advanced mountaineering expertise but lacked peaks above 8,000 meters within its borders. Given the good-neighborly friendship with China, the Soviets suggested a joint expedition to Qomolangma, Yuan said.

But as Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, the Soviet Union uni-

laterally withdrew from the project, cutting off high-altitude equipment and supplies. Meanwhile, India — becoming closer with the Soviets — launched its own attempt from the southern slope, according to Yuan.

Tall order

The Soviet withdrawal left China to figure out many problems on its own, Yuan said. Amid a period of severe economic difficulties, the government allocated \$700,000 — approved by then-Chinese president Liu Shaoqi and premier Zhou Enlai — to purchase mountaineering equipment from Europe.

Yet, without firsthand knowledge of Qomolangma's terrain, the purchasers relied on British expedition notes, guessing at equipment needs. This led to imprecise calculations for critical items like ropes and oxygen tanks, forcing last-minute purchases with compromised quality and suitability, Yuan added.

Despite all preparations, Qomolangma's north slope — dubbed "impassable even for birds" — was

generally believed to be insurmountable, as it pushed every climber to their limits with its thin air, months-long climbs, brutal winds, freezing cold and treacherous terrain.

Overcoming setbacks

To explore the northern route of Mount Qomolangma, China conducted three acclimatization expeditions starting in March 1960.

The first reached an altitude of 6,800 meters before encountering an impassable ice wall. The second reached over 7,200 meters but was halted by strong winds. The third reached over 8,600 meters but was forced to retreat due to severe frostbite and casualties, Yuan said.

These expeditions helped the team map the climbing route, establish camps and transport supplies, and accumulate crucial experience for their fourth summit attempt.

At 4:20 am on May 25, during the fourth expedition, Wang Fuzhou, Gonpo and Qu Yinhua — oxygen-depleted, fingers blackened by frostbite — summited in darkness, planting a Chinese national flag and leaving the footprints of the Chinese people atop the world's highest

peak for the first time, Yuan said.

After descending, team members recounted the summit experience: when they reached the top of the visible rock, they mistakenly believed they had reached the summit and were overjoyed, according to Yuan.

However, as they looked west, a snow slope several meters higher appeared. Crossing it, they found themselves on a conical summit surrounded by endless white snow, with no higher ground visible — confirming they had reached Qomolangma's true peak, Yuan said.

Climbers today follow the same path, also needing to scale that rock before seeing the snow slope and reaching the summit.

Thus, even though no video footage of their summit was recorded due to nighttime conditions and camera issues, their detailed recollections proved the successful ascent and silenced skeptics, according to Yuan.

Thanks to the feat achieved by the Chinese mountaineering team, the boundary treaty between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Nepal — where the southern slope of the peak lies — was officially signed in 1961, resolving the historical boundary issues between the two countries, according to Xinhua News Agency.

As Gonpo later reflected: "We carried the nation's hopes on our backs. Even if only one of us remained, we would fight to the end and reach the summit."

Six decades on, their journey remains a testament to resilience and the unyielding spirit that lifts humanity to impossible heights.



Chen Lihao (left) and Chen Gang during a scientific survey mission to summit Mount Qomolangma in 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Measuring up a tall task for science

By LI PEIXUAN

Fifty years ago, China announced its first precise measurement of Mount Qomolangma, also known as Mount Everest. Nowadays, China's ongoing measurement missions in the region remain important in understanding the evolving conditions on the world's tallest mountain.

China's persistent measurements provide precise elevation and location data that serve as a critical global benchmark for global geographic information systems and topographic mapping, ensuring the world's maps stay accurate, said Chen Gang, a professor at the China University of Geosciences (Wuhan). He noted that Mount Qomolangma grows a little every year.

The data aids in understanding plate movements and crustal deformation, while supporting critical research in geology, geography and meteorology, as well as applications in resource exploration and environ-

mental conservation, Chen added.

"Qomolangma is more than a mountain — it's a natural laboratory," he said, explaining that the mountain stands as a sensitive indicator of Earth's activity, that drives scientific breakthroughs and thus attracts global research attention.

"Our work here supports everything from disaster prevention to navigation systems worldwide," he said.

Beyond science, many countries conduct measurements of Qomolangma to test and showcase their cutting-edge technologies. Thus, the mountain has become a stage for demonstrating technological prowess, according to Chen.

From 1975 to 2020, China's measurement techniques, evolving from traditional geodesy to using the Beidou navigation satellite system, enabled a high degree of precision in determining Mount Qomolangma's height, with each result accurate to two decimal places, Chen said.

Precisely measuring Qomolangma

upholds national sovereignty. "The north slope lies within China's borders, so it is our right and responsibility to measure and publish its height," he said.

Measuring the peak is akin to measuring a person's height. "We first establish where the foot is, then measure the distance to the head," Chen said.

Scientists use Earth's mean sea level as the base, with China adopting the Yellow Sea's average level as its reference, according to *Approaching the Top of the Earth*, a popular science book compiled by the National Tibetan Plateau Data Center and other institutions.

The survey team then proceeds with instruments, synchronizing measurements with climbing efforts, Chen said.

The surveyors need to carry fragile instruments as they ascend, making the task of climbing the mountain more arduous.

Sometimes, repeated trips are



Members of the mountaineering team set up equipment on top of Qomolangma for a scientific measuring mission on May 27, 2020. PHOTOS BY TASHI TSERING / XINHUA



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needed — like in 2023, when snowfall forced three attempts. Despite such setbacks, the repeated journeys often net better results, Chen said.

The professor noted, however, that without climbers fixing ropes, setting up camps and providing supplies, the task would be much harder.

During breaks in the weather, the

team conducts a survey beacon to the summit and the Beidou system, Chen said.

The beacon, equipped with red prisms, allows six ground stations to measure distances via laser reflections, enabling triangulation. This ensures data collection continues even after the team descends, he said.

To ensure precision, multiple techniques — including global navigation satellite systems, leveling, photoelectric distance measurement, satellite remote sensing and gravity surveys — are combined. Rigorous calculations and verification yield the final elevation — 8,848.86 meters as of data released in 2020.

RCEP MEDIA & THINK TANK FORUM

Scholars, officials speak on the need to advance regional integration

By ZHAO JIA in Haikou
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Scholars and officials on Sunday called for greater solidarity and cooperation to steadily advance regional integration under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Speaking during a thematic dialogue at the 2025 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum, participants explored practical ways to deepen cultural ties and strengthen mutual understanding across the region.

Tunyathip Saengsuwan, a senior officer at the RCEP Support Unit, stressed the need to enhance both the implementation and effective use of the agreement.

She noted that one of RCEP's biggest challenges is underutilization. A major reason, she said, lies in the complexity of some provisions and procedures, including rules of origin and non-linear tariff reduction schedules.

Such technical elements are often difficult for businesses — especially small and medium-sized enterprises — to understand, which limits their ability to fully benefit from the pact, she said.

Saengsuwan called on RCEP member states, along with businesses, think tanks, media outlets and academic institutions, to work more closely to ensure the agreement is fully implemented and its potential realized.

"Globalization is not only about economic integration, but also about deepening people-to-people ties," said Liu Gang, director of the Xinhua News Agency Research Institute. "Mutual learning among civilizations and an appreciation of cultural diversity play an irreplaceable role in facilitating economic and trade exchanges."

Although the 15 RCEP members vary widely in development stages, economic size, social systems and historical and cultural backgrounds, Liu said their shared aspiration for common prosperity has united them.

By "seeking common ground while shelving differences," Liu expressed confidence that the countries can address geopolitical

or historical tensions and unlock meaningful opportunities for collective growth.

He added that China's initiatives — such as promoting high-quality Belt and Road Initiative cooperation and building a community with a shared future for humanity — are aimed at strengthening mutual understanding and trust, while fostering a more closely knit, open and inclusive regional cooperation framework.

At a time when protectionism and unilateralism are disrupting the global economic and trade order, Khin Maung Zaw, joint secretary of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, welcomed the unity shown by several major Asian economies under the RCEP framework in tackling shared challenges.

He expressed hope that countries with strengths in production, supply chains, value chains and infrastructure would support other members in achieving inclusive and equitable development across the region.

Kris Mada, deputy editor of the international section at Kompas Morning Daily in Indonesia, emphasized the importance of helping the public understand the real-world benefits of RCEP. Doing so, he said, is essential to building broad-based consensus and public support.

RCEP has already delivered tangible gains for ordinary people, Mada said, including opportunities to study abroad, receive scholarships, find jobs overseas and access broader markets for their products.

He encouraged RCEP members to make the pact more attractive by expanding openness and improving connectivity — for example, by offering more competitive scholarships and promoting tourism.

Official data shows that a vocational education cooperation project along the China-Laos Railway has trained more than 2,000 railway technicians for Laos. Since the railway opened, it has carried more than 20 million passengers and significantly boosted cultural and tourism development along the route.



Participants listen to an address on Jointly Building High-Level and Largest Free Trade Area during the 2025 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, on Sunday.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China, ASEAN trade to benefit from deal

New agreement to boost cooperation, mitigate risks from unilateralism

By ZHONG NAN in Beijing
and WANG KEJU in Haikou

The implementation of Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement will further bolster supply chain cooperation and catalyze industrial upgrading, experts said on Sunday, just a few days after negotiations on the deal were completed.

Speaking at a thematic dialogue of the 2025 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum held in Haikou, Hainan province, they said CAFTA 3.0 will not only upgrade the cooperation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, but also mitigate risks brought by unilateralism.

Economic and trade ministers from China and the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states announced last week the full completion of CAFTA 3.0 negotiations.

Both sides will move forward with their domestic signing and ratification processes, aiming to formally sign the CAFTA 3.0 upgrade protocol by the end of this year, according to China's Ministry of Commerce.

CAFTA 3.0 will help both China and ASEAN reconfigure global value chains, deepen mutual openness and boost cooperation in emerging industries, said Zhang Lijuan, a professor of international trade and world economy at Shandong University.

"As both sides are member economies of the RCEP, this will also inject fresh momentum into the

pact's growth in the next stage," Zhang said.

Xing Haiming, China's former ambassador to South Korea, expressed the need for cooperation.

"We must recognize that, in the current climate of United States-led tariff measures, there is a shared resolve to come together and make things work," Xing said.

"Given the external pressures already steering us in this direction, we must respond accordingly," he added.

China-ASEAN trade reached 2.38 trillion yuan (\$329.62 billion) in the first four months of this year, up 9.2 percent year-on-year, accounting for 16.8 percent of China's total foreign trade, according to statistics from the General Administration of Customs.

CAFTA 3.0 will establish an inclusive, modern, comprehensive and mutually beneficial free trade framework. It incorporates nine new chapters on areas such as the digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, and economic and technical cooperation.

Huang Qunhui, a member of the economic committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said these additions will enable both sides to strengthen regional economic integration under new conditions, significantly enhance industrial and supply chain collaboration, and serve as a pioneering step for other bilateral or multilateral free trade deals.

For instance, despite significant progress, disparities in infrastructure development between China and ASEAN countries persist, with the digital divide posing a challenge to integration.

The CAFTA 3.0 framework will

help bridge this gap and support more balanced, inclusive growth, said Huang, who is also a senior research fellow at the Institute of Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Echoing this sentiment, Alvin Ang, senior researcher at Brunei's Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, said small economies like Brunei integrate into trade agreements not just for foreign capital, but also for guidance and support, ensuring these investments yield meaningful results.

The upgrade of free trade agreements benefits not only individual countries, but also strengthens the broader regional trade community, he said.

Supreme Intelligent Technology Co, a Ningbo, Zhejiang province-based manufacturer of sewing machine equipment, welcomed the conclusion of the CAFTA 3.0 talks as a positive step forward.

"Our products are in high demand in Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia," said Luo Qian, the company's president.

Supreme Intelligent Technology Co saw its exports to the ASEAN market surge 30 percent year-on-year to 80 million yuan between January and April, data from Ningbo Customs showed.

As an increasing number of manufacturers in Southeast Asia are keen to adopt advanced robotics systems and automated production lines to reduce their reliance on manual labor, Luo said that the implementation of CAFTA 3.0 will further enable more Chinese companies to seize new opportunities in the region.

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More needs to be done to promote trading bloc

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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Media professionals and think tank experts on Sunday called for stronger implementation strategies and broader public outreach to maximize the benefits of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement.

Speaking at a sub-forum of the 2025 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, participants noted that while the agreement has boosted economic integration since taking effect in January 2022, challenges remain in adoption and public awareness.

The RCEP includes 15 Asia-Pacific nations and covers approximately one-third of the global GDP and population.

Lucio B. Pitlo III, president of the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies, said more effort is needed to highlight the pact's success stories while addressing hurdles.

Media and think tanks play a vital role in explaining RCEP's benefits and driving business engagement."

Tunyathip Saengsuwan, senior officer at the RCEP Support Unit

"While we need transparent communication about implementation hurdles, we must also amplify stories of companies successfully using RCEP's preferential terms to grow their market share," he said. "These success cases are crucial for promoting the agreement."

Pitlo underscored RCEP's strategic importance, saying it pushes back against unilateralism and protectionism while advancing regional economic integration.

U Aye Chan, general secretary of the Myanmar Press Council, said limited awareness in Myanmar remains a barrier, especially among the general public.

"While government and big businesses utilize RCEP, general public knowledge remains minimal as people focus on other national issues," he said. "We need comprehensive education campaigns — not just for policymakers but at grassroots and entrepreneur levels — to demonstrate RCEP's importance."

Tunyathip Saengsuwan, senior officer at the RCEP Support Unit, pointed to specific obstacles hindering the pact's full potential.

"Media and think tanks play a vital role in explaining RCEP's benefits and driving business engagement," she said. "Current underutilization stems from complex provisions like rules of origin and nonlinear tariff elimination schedules that confuse enterprises."

She added that these technical complexities often become practical barriers to implementation. Stronger collaboration is needed among governments, the private sector, media and academia to bridge the gap between policy design and business realities, she said.

Luan Ruiying, associate senior editor of China Watch, said media and think tanks can increase engagement by translating policy into relatable narratives. By reporting success stories and offering professional analysis, they can help governments, businesses and the public better understand the content and impact of RCEP, she said.

Luan emphasized the importance of creating platforms for dialogue, such as forums and seminars, to promote policy communication and share best practices.

Kris Mada, deputy editor of the international desk at Kompas Morning Daily, said messaging should focus on real-life benefits.

"Promoting RCEP means showing people how it improves their daily lives — job opportunities abroad, educational exchanges, export possibilities — not focusing on technical agreement terms," he said.

Sharing ideas



Speakers share their ideas on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership at the 2025 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, on Saturday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

What they say

2025 The current global trade environment allows little room for complacency. If RCEP fails to evolve to meet expectations, it risks losing relevance amid rising protectionism. We must recognize this moment as a call to action, not only to preserve the current framework, but to elevate it. To solidify RCEP's role as the world's leading free trade agreement, we must pursue deeper integration — raising market openness, expanding membership and exploring convergence with the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) in the long term.

Lee Hee-sup, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

The RCEP has established a valuable framework for regional cooperation among countries in East Asia and ASEAN, which are not only close neighbors but also significant trading partners. In the current climate of global

economic uncertainty, this high level of openness provides crucial support for regional development and serves as a key pillar of collective progress.

Zhang Lijuan, a professor of international trade and world economy at Shandong University

Amid a rapidly shifting international landscape, media and think tanks play important roles in fostering cross-border understanding and serving as bridges between nations. Strengthening ties through mechanisms like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is critical to maximizing shared benefits in an era of geopolitical assemblages and complexity.

Liu Gang, director of the Xinhua News Agency Research Institute

Rising protectionism and growing geopolitical uncertainties are threatening the multilateral trading system. Amid these pressures, the RCEP has emerged as a stabilizing force, playing a pivotal role in advancing regional integration and mitigating trade volatility. RCEP is not merely a trade agreement, but a tool for economic security. It helps bolster resilient value chains and stabilize the multilateral trading system.

Dina Kurniasari, ASEAN co-chair of the RCEP Joint Committee and director of WTO Negotiations at Indonesia's Ministry of Trade

We should focus our attention on the pressing issues facing humanity, such as climate change, poverty reduction and social governance, rather than being distracted by the tariff wars initiated by the current administration of the United States. Since it came into

effect three years ago, RCEP has made significant contributions to the social development and improvement of people's well-being across its 15 member countries. Looking ahead, RCEP members should remain committed to their own development paths and advance cooperation in accordance with the rules they have jointly established. The idea of "de-globalization" is a false proposition. Globalization is an unstoppable trend of history. While the US may currently be attempting to disrupt this process, its influence is limited. The true mainstream of the international community consists of countries — RCEP members among them — that remain committed to openness, cooperation and globalization. I am full of confidence in the future of RCEP.

Wang Wen, dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China

We should fully leverage RCEP's role in countering unilateralism and trade protectionism, and further promote regional economic integration. In a time of profound changes in the global landscape, it is important to reaffirm the significance of free trade. Free trade may not be perfect — it comes with certain costs — but it also brings substantial benefits. If we are well-prepared and clearly understand our position within the regional and global systems, we will be better equipped to seize opportunities. Information exchange is critical in this process. We need to strengthen communication and the sharing of information. Government economic departments should take more proactive and effective measures to promote and publicize RCEP and address the concerns and doubts raised by the public and various organizations.

Lucio B. Pitlo III, president of the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies

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WORLD

Leaders affirm ASEAN role amid tensions

Bloc emphasizes unity to tackle global challenges, achieve shared prosperity

By YANG HAN in Kuala Lumpur
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Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations stressed the bloc's 'indispensable role' amid rising geopolitical tensions and trade protectionism on the eve of the ASEAN Summit on Sunday.

"In this challenging environment, ASEAN's role is more indispensable than ever to safeguard the foundations of regional cooperation and sustain the hard-won peace and shared prosperity," said Kao Kim Hourn, ASEAN secretary-general.

Kao was addressing via video link the 2025 ASEAN Leadership and Partnership Forum, which was held ahead of the two-day 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

As the global economy confronts headwinds from rising protectionism and escalating trade tensions that threaten the region's sustainable and inclusive growth, ASEAN must stand firm in defending an open, rules-based and predictable trading system, Kao said.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh said ASEAN countries must jointly promote multilateralism because no single country can address the various challenges of today's world alone.

"It is necessary for us to stand united to resolve global challenges with cooperation so as to bring about a life of peace, progress and sustainable development for humanity as a whole," Chinh said.

He also called on the business community to contribute to ASEAN resilience and help connect regional supply chains for shared prosperity.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said, "With the global economic landscape rapidly shifting in an unknown direction, ASEAN cannot afford to be reactive."

Hun Manet, whose speech was delivered by Sok Siphana, senior minister of special missions, said it is necessary for the bloc to proactively position itself as an attractive destination for investors, leveraging various free trade agreements, and the strategic ties with key global markets.

Although the global challenges cannot be downplayed, the region should also take more measures to promote transformation toward

digitalization and the green economy in an inclusive way that can translate economic success into real benefit for the people, Hun Manet said.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand, said via video link that advancing the leadership of women is critical to ASEAN's inclusive and sustainable future.

"I believe that empowering women will unlock the potential of half its population and bring tangible benefit to our societies, as women can play a transformative role in socioeconomic development," Paetongtarn said.

To achieve this, she called for enhancing regional cooperation, investing in education and financial inclusion for women, and removing barriers to ensure equal rights and opportunities for leadership at all levels.

Unleashing potential

Under the theme "Unleashing ASEAN's Potential Through Innovative, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth," the forum was organized by ASEAN Economic Club, ASEAN Business Club, ASEAN Business Advisory Council, and the KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific.

China Daily was a co-organizer of the event.

"Globally, the world is talking of a 'Great Reset' and (it) should include ASEAN," said Michael Yeoh, chairman of the ASEAN Economic Club and president of KSI.

ASEAN is facing challenges in disruption and digitalization, he said, expressing hope that member countries can work together to build a more united bloc with a better and more sustainable future.

In his welcoming remarks via video link, Zhou Li, deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily, said the China-ASEAN partnership "has created opportunities that extend beyond borders, benefiting millions across the region."

The forum brought together 400 delegates from government, business and academia from ASEAN and beyond to discuss topics, including ASEAN's leadership in the world of uncertainty, digital transformation, sustainable development, and supply chain connectivity.



Palestinian doctor Alaa al-Najjar visits her critically injured husband, Hamdi al-Najjar, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, on Friday. Their home was hit by an Israeli airstrike that killed nine of her 10 children; only one child survived but remains in critical condition. HANI ALSHAER VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israeli strikes kill Gaza doctor's 9 children

CAIRO — The bodies of 79 people killed by Israeli strikes have been brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Saturday, a toll that does not include hospitals in the battered north that it said are now inaccessible.

Nine of a doctor's 10 children were among those killed in Israel's renewed military offensive, colleagues and the Health Ministry said.

Alaa al-Najjar, a pediatrician at Nasser Hospital, was on duty at the time and ran home to find her family's house on fire, Ahmad al-Farra, head of the hospital's pediatric department, told The Associated Press.

Najjar's husband, Hamdi al-Najjar, was severely wounded and their only surviving child, an 11-year-old son, was in critical condition after Friday's strike in the southern city of Khan Younis, Farra said.

The dead children ranged in age from 7 months to 12 years.

Suheir al-Najjar, the niece of Hamdi, told Turkiye's Anadolu news agency that civil defense teams managed to retrieve seven bodies, while two remain under the rubble of their home.

She said the Israeli military initially struck it with a dud missile, followed minutes later by another that exploded and leveled the house.

"They knew that inside were 10 children and two doctors. They knew, and they did it anyway."

She confirmed that the children arrived at the hospital in horrific condition — charred, dismembered, some without heads.

Munir al-Bursh, director general of the Health Ministry in Gaza, wrote on X: "This is the reality our medical staff in Gaza endure. Words

fall short in describing the pain."

Wafa, the official news agency of the Palestinian Authority, commented on the "unbearable irony": the doctor who had spent months saving Gaza's children amid an ongoing Israeli campaign of extermination could do nothing to save her own.

Asked about the incident, the Israeli military said it had "struck a number of suspects who were identified operating from a structure" near its troops.

"The Khan Younis area is a dangerous war zone," it said. "The claim regarding harm to uninvolved civilians is under review."

Earlier on Saturday, a statement said Israel's air force struck more than 100 targets throughout Gaza over the past day.

The Health Ministry said the new deaths brought the toll in the 19-month-old conflict to 53,901. The ministry said 3,747 people have been killed in Gaza since Israel

resumed the offensive on March 18.

Israel also imposed a blockade of Gaza and its more than 2 million people since early March. Last week, the first aid trucks entered the territory and began reaching Palestinians since the blockade began.

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sought a new aid delivery and distribution system by a newly established United States-backed group, but the United Nations and partners have rejected it, saying it allows Israel to use food as a weapon and violates humanitarian principles.

Israel may now be changing its approach to let aid groups remain in charge of nonfood assistance, according to a letter obtained by the AP. Israel accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid but the UN and aid groups deny there is significant diversion.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

DPRK

Three detained for warship accident

Law enforcement authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have detained three people responsible for a recent failed warship launch for legal investigation, the official Korean Central News Agency said on Sunday. The investigation group informed the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea of its work on Saturday, the report said. According to the investigation data confirmed by the group, Kang Jong-chol, chief engineer of the Chongjin Shipyard; Han Kyong-hak, head of the hull construction workshop; and Kim Yong-hak, deputy manager for administrative affairs, were detained. "There is no additional identified damage to the warship and the field rehabilitation promotion team is pushing ahead with the rehabilitation plan as scheduled," the report said. Authorities have launched a full investigation after the newly built 5,000-ton destroyer suffered a "serious accident" during the launch at the Chongjin Shipyard on Wednesday.

COLOMBIA

10 dead in university outing bus mishap

A field trip by students and their professors ended in tragedy on Saturday when their bus crashed in western Colombia, killing 10 people and injuring 11, their university said. The bus driver lost control of the vehicle as it carried 26 passengers from Tolima to Quindio, according to a preliminary investigation. Several people were thrown off the bus when it slammed into the barrier on the side of the Helicoil Bridge in the Quindio region, police commander Luis Fernando Atuesta said. "Several passengers were ejected and fell into the abyss," the officer said, adding that investigations were underway to "establish the conditions of this unfortunate accident".

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Bangladesh to start mango exports to China

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong and NK SANCHAYA in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh is set to export mangoes to China for the first time, with the inaugural consignment to be dispatched this week, a government official says.

The first shipment to the new export market will be undertaken on Wednesday, Bangladesh's agriculture secretary, Mohammad Emdad Ullah Mian, said at a news conference in Dhaka last week, local media reported.

"About 50 tons of mangoes will be exported to China this year," and talks are on with Chinese authorities as well as the Chinese ambassador in Dhaka for more exports, he said.

There are plans to export jackfruit from Bangladesh to China in various phases, he said.

The news of fruit exports to China was welcomed by Bangladeshi industry organizations and fruit growers.

Ashfaqur Rahman Palash, president of the Bangladesh Association of Hong Kong, told China Daily, "I think it's a very good initiative from the Chinese government, and I believe through this deal our friendship will be stronger."

Mango trade will benefit both countries, he said, adding Bangladeshi mangoes have several plus points.

The mangoes are priced favorably from the consumer perspective, and many are also grown organically, he said, adding that Bangladeshi mangoes will "make a huge difference"

to China compared with imports of the fruit from any other country.

Al Mamun Mridha, former secretary-general of the Bangladesh China Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said there is significant potential for Bangladeshi mango exports to China.

"The rising demand for tropical fruits in China, along with duty-free access under the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement and complementary harvest seasons, offers a strategic advantage (to Bangladesh)," he said.

Because of favorable weather conditions, mangoes are growing abundantly across Bangladesh right now. Emdad Ullah Mian said Bangladesh produces on average 2.5 million tons of mangoes each year, but exports only 1,000 to 3,000 tons.

The country received approval from China's General Administration of Customs in July for export of fresh mangoes. Reports say Bangladesh is still awaiting Chinese approval for jackfruit and guava exports.

Enthusied by initiative

This mango export initiative has enthused local farmers who are eager to showcase Bangladesh's premium mango varieties such as Langra and Humsagar in the vast Chinese market. Chapai Nawabganj District, about 300 kilometers northwest of Dhaka, is Bangladesh's main mango-growing district and is popularly called the country's "Capital of Mango".

Md Akas Ali, an orchard owner and trader in Chapai Nawabganj, which has been famous in recent years for

producing high-quality, chemical-free mangoes by using Chinese methods as an effective alternative to chemical pesticides, said, "We (see) this opportunity (to export mangoes to China) as a transformative boost for our mango farming and our livelihoods."

"We are very happy because China is a very lucrative market with its vast (number of) consumers."

Ali said farmers are expecting income stability amid volatile local demand during peak season of mangoes.

"We need more collaborative efforts with the Bangladeshi government and private sectors from Bangladesh and China for our capacity-building as we are marking a new era of agricultural prosperity in Bangladesh," he said. "If we can maintain quality standards, China could surely emerge as a major market for Bangladeshi mangoes."

Mridha said key challenges must be addressed, including compliance with stringent Chinese phytosanitary standards, and Bangladesh's limited cold chain infrastructure, weak branding and logistical inefficiencies.

"With sustained regulatory compliance, marketing and institutional coordination, Bangladesh is well-positioned to capture a share of China's growing mango market," he said.

NK Sanchaya is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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ifaw 国际爱护动物基金会

GWCA 全球野生动物保护协会

AD

Between heaven and earth, together with other sentient beings, I live.

—Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

——《庄子·齐物论》

豹猫 Leopard cat



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WORLD

US Senate votes to block California emission rules

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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The US Senate has voted to block California's ambitious mandate requiring the phase-out of gasoline-powered vehicles, delivering a significant setback to the state's transition toward clean energy and setting the stage for a legal confrontation.

In a 51-44 party-line vote, the Republican-controlled Senate voted on Thursday to revoke federal waivers that permit California to establish vehicle emission standards stricter than federal rules. The measure, which has passed the House of Representatives, now awaits President Donald Trump's signature.

The congressional action represents the first time in more than six decades that lawmakers have moved to block California's vehicle emission standards, marking a dramatic escalation in the ongoing national debate over electric vehicle policy and state regulatory authority.

California Governor Gavin Newsom immediately condemned the Senate vote, declaring that "zero-emission vehicles are here to stay". California's Attorney General Rob Bonta announced that the state would file a lawsuit against the Trump administration, calling the congressional action unlawful.

The revoked waivers, granted by the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, under the Joe Biden administration, include an electric vehicle mandate and two rules targeting diesel truck emissions. Under California's mandate, 35 percent of new vehicles sold in the state must be of zero emissions by 2026, with the rate escalating to 68 percent by 2030 and reaching 100 percent by 2035.

The authority for California's emission standards traces back to the 1970 Clean Air Act, which granted the state special regulatory powers due to its unique air quality challenges. However, implementation requires EPA approval for standards exceeding federal requirements.

The Clean Air Act also allows other states to adopt California's emission standards. Eleven other states have adopted California's electric vehicle mandate, while a growing number embrace the state's more stringent regulations.

Republican lawmakers and industry supporters said the mandates are costly and impractical and prevent consumers and businesses from making their own

choices. "US carmakers and auto dealers argued that keeping in place the waiver ... could cripple the industry by forcing sales of cars the public doesn't want in mass numbers," said the Senate's report.

The American Petroleum Institute, representing oil industry interests, has repeatedly challenged California's stricter rules through lawsuits, saying that electric vehicle mandates reduce consumer options while increasing vehicle costs.

Opposition voiced

Environmental and public health organizations strongly opposed the Senate action, warning of severe consequences for air quality and climate objectives. More than 100 environmental and public health groups said in an April letter to Congress that blocking California's standards would result in over 1.5 million metric tons of nitrogen oxides, 17,700 metric tons of fine particles, and 1.6 billion metric tons of climate-harming emissions being released into the atmosphere.

"More pollution means more children suffering asthma attacks and missing school, more grandparents dying prematurely, and more death and destruction from extreme weather," the groups warned.

The Union of Concerned Scientists described the congressional move as "illegitimate", while the Zero Emission Transportation Association, representing electric automakers, called the waiver repeal "an extraordinary action that sets a dangerous precedent".

Trump, a Republican, had repeatedly pledged to revoke the waivers granted to California before he assumed office in January. During his first term, Trump revoked California's waiver in 2019, a move that was later reversed by the administration of Biden, a Democrat, in 2022.

The use of the Congressional Review Act to revoke California's waivers is new, as last time Congress was not involved. Both the Government Accountability Office and the Senate parliamentarian, serving as neutral arbiters of procedural rules, have determined that California's waivers cannot be legally repealed through this mechanism.

While describing the congressional action as "totally norm-busting", Ann Carlson, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, told CalMatters, a nonprofit news organization, that Congress is "willing to use a statute that doesn't apply, which is highly unusual".



Set for 2nd term

Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa reacts next to his wife Lavinia Valbonesi after his inauguration for a second term at the presidential palace in Quito, Ecuador, on Saturday. The 37-year-old businessman, who was reelected in April, had just completed an initial 18-month term after winning snap elections in late 2023. His new term will run through 2029.

KAREN TORO / REUTERS

Europe vows to defend interests

Trade tensions high as Trump threatens to slap 50% tariffs on imports from EU

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The European Union has called for respect while vowing to defend its interests following US President Donald Trump's threat on Friday to impose a 50 percent tariff on EU exports to the US.

European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic said the bloc is fully engaged, and committed to securing a deal that works for both the EU and the US.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said the EU was formed for the primary purpose of taking advantage of the US on trade and has been very difficult to deal with.

"Their powerful Trade Barriers, Vat Taxes, ridiculous Corporate Penalties, Non-Monetary Trade Barriers, Monetary Manipulations, unfair and unjustified lawsuits against American Companies, and more, have led to a Trade Deficit with the US of more than \$250,000,000 a year, a number which is totally acceptable," Trump wrote.

"Our discussions with them are going nowhere! Therefore, I am recommending a straight 50% Tariff on the European Union, starting on June 1, 2025," he said.

Trump added there is no tariff if the product is built or manufactured in the US.

In response, Sefcovic said he spoke with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, and the European Commission remains ready to work in good faith.

"EU-US trade is unmatched & must be guided by mutual respect, not threats. We stand ready to defend our interests," he said on X.

At an executive order signing in the Oval Office later Friday, Trump escalated his threat to the EU.

"I'm not looking for a deal," he said. "We've set the deal — it's at 50 percent," he told reporters.

The US has since mid-March imposed 25 percent tariffs on EU steel and aluminum despite a truce reached between the EU and then US president Joe Biden following the tit-for-tat tariff war arising from US steel tariffs during Trump's first term. Trump has also imposed 25 percent tariffs on EU-made cars and 10 percent on all EU imports.

The 10 percent tariff is expected to remain in place until July 9, when Trump's 90-day pause of reciprocal tariffs expires.

The EU also suspended for 90

days its 25 percent retaliatory tariffs in response to US steel tariffs despite the fact that Trump did not pause the steel and aluminum tariffs.

Trump had rejected the EU's offer of zero-for-zero tariff for industrial goods. The EU has also offered to buy more US energy and weapons. But the gap between the two sides is still huge, such as regarding EU rules on agricultural goods and digital services.

Shortly after Trump's threat, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News on Friday that the "EU proposals have not been of the same quality that we've seen from our other important trading partners".

"I'm not going to negotiate on TV, but I would hope that this would light a fire under the EU," he said.

Lutnick, the US commerce secretary, last month criticized EU regulations for preventing US meat and chicken from entering the single market due to the use of hormones deemed unsafe by the EU.

'Not up for negotiation'

Sefcovic told the European media recently that EU standards on agriculture and food are "not up for negotiation".

French Foreign Trade Minister Laurent Saint-Martin said on Friday that Trump's latest tariff threats "do not help at all during the negotiation period between the EU and the US".

"We maintain the same stance:

de-escalation but are ready to respond," he wrote on X.

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof told reporters that he supported the EU's strategy in trade talks, saying "we have seen before that tariffs can go up and down in talks with the US".

German Economy Minister Katherine Reiche said the EU "must do everything" to reach a solution with the US.

Noting that "tariff conflicts know no winners," Reiche said, "Tariffs harm the United States and the EU in equal measure."

The EU on May 8 proposed countermeasures on up to 95 billion euros (\$108 billion) of US imports if bilateral negotiations fail to revoke Trump's various tariffs. The EU measures target US wine, bourbon whiskey and other spirits, fish, aircraft, cars, chemicals, electrical equipment, health products and machinery.

A 50 percent levy on EU imports could raise consumer prices on everything from German cars to Italian olive oil, Reuters reported.

The EU's total exports to the United States last year totaled about 500 billion euros. Pharmaceuticals, cars and auto parts, chemicals and aircraft were among the largest exports, according to EU data.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

S. Korea front-runner Lee seeks levy talks' extension

SEOUL — South Korean presidential front-runner Lee Jae-myung said on Sunday the deadline to reach a deal with the US on trade tariffs needs to be reconsidered to find a mutually beneficial agreement between the two countries.

Tariff negotiations with the United States will be one of the biggest challenges for the winner of the June 3 election, Lee told a news conference.

The snap election was called after Yoon Suk-yeol was impeached as president and removed from office for briefly declaring martial law in December. Lee, from the main opposition Democratic Party of Korea, is leading in opinion polls over presidential contestants.

Seoul and Washington have said they aim to craft a package on tariffs and economic cooperation by July 8. But the South Korean minister of trade and industry said recently there

was not enough time and delays would be possible due to the election.

"There is not much time," Lee said. "Isn't diplomacy something that benefits both sides? If one country benefits and the other country suffers unilaterally, that is not diplomacy. It is called plunder."

He called for mutual respect between the two countries, saying they "need to reconsider whether the timeline set by one side should be bound to".

Lee said South Korea must compile an extra budget to boost the economy in the short term and vowed that if elected he would form and head a task force to tackle the slowing economy.

"I will swiftly prepare immediately actionable economic measures and actively respond to the domestic economic slowdown with the determination to fight the recession," he said.



South Korean presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung participates in a tug-of-war contest as part of campaigning in Dangjin on Sunday. YNA

"We should maintain and strengthen our powerful defense capabilities, military power and strengthen the South Korea-US security alliance, but find a path toward dialogue, cooperation, communication and coexistence where possible," said Lee, who considers pragmatism as a key to diplomacy.

Lee is leading the race with 45 percent support ahead of conservative rival Kim Moon-soo, Yoon's labor

minister, with 36 percent support in a Gallup Korea poll released on Friday.

Kim has been closing the initially double-digit gap with Lee. Asked about his recent decline in polls, Lee said he was confident that South Koreans would not choose those who supported or staged the "insurrection", referring to the criminal charges against Yoon over martial law.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Operation cleanup



Residents clean a flood-damaged house in Glenthorne, Australia, on Saturday. Catastrophic flooding struck the Mid North Coast and other parts of New South Wales, isolating over 50,000 residents, and leaving at least five people dead. RONI BINTANG / GETTY IMAGES

Russia, Ukraine wrap up largest prisoner swap

MOSCOW/KYIV — Russia and Ukraine completed the exchange of 1,000 prisoners each on Sunday, wrapping up the largest prisoner swap under an agreement reached during their recent talks in Istanbul.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that 303 Russian servicemen have "returned from Kyiv-controlled territory", while an equivalent number of Ukrainian prisoners have also been freed.

Among those released were personnel from the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the National Guard, the State Border Guard Service, and the State Special Transport Service, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X.

The freed Russian prisoners are on the territory of the Republic of Belarus, where they are being provided with necessary psychological and medical assistance, said the Russian Defense Ministry.

Following their direct negotiations in Istanbul on May 16, Russia and Ukraine agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners each, marking the largest prisoner swap since the start of the conflict in 2022.

On Friday, both sides exchanged 270 soldiers and 120 civilians, followed by a 307-for-307 swap of military personnel on Saturday.

All exchanges of prisoners and fallen soldiers between Russia and Ukraine have previously been facili-

tated by Belarus and carried out on its territory, with the consent of the leadership of both Russia and Ukraine, Natalya Eismont, press secretary of the Belarusian president, told TASS on Friday.

The three-day exchange of prisoners was the 65th swap of captives between the two sides since the start of the conflict and the sixth of its kind this year, according to Ukraine's Coordinating Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

Russia has signaled it will send Ukraine its terms for a peace settlement after the exchange, without saying what those terms would be.

The two countries have held regu-

lar prisoner swaps, but none has been on this scale, AFP reported.

However, the prisoner exchange did not herald a halt in the fighting.

Russia launched an overnight attack on Kyiv, the city's mayor said, warning residents to stay in shelters.

The capital was "under attack" but "air defenses are operating," said Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

Overnight attacks were also reported in the Mykolajiv and Khererson regions.

In Moscow, restrictions were imposed on at least four airports, including the main hub Sheremetyevo, the Russian civilian aviation authority said.

Mayor Sergey Sobyanyin said 12

drones flying toward the Russian capital had been intercepted.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that overnight and early on Saturday its forces shot down over 100 Ukrainian drones over six provinces in western and southern Russia.

The drone strikes injured three people in the Tula region south of Moscow, local Governor Dmitry Milyaev said, and sparked a fire at an industrial site there.

Andriy Kovalenko, of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, said on Saturday the drones hit a plant in Tula that makes chemicals used in explosives and rocket fuel.

After the May 16 Istanbul meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a "confidence-building measure" and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow would give Ukraine a draft document outlining its conditions for a "sustainable, long-term, comprehensive" peace agreement, once the ongoing prisoner exchange is completed, The Associated Press reported.

The Istanbul meeting revealed that both sides remained far apart on key conditions for ending the fighting. One such condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a peaceful settlement.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

BUSINESS

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Exporters find new home in domestic market

Supportive measures helping export-oriented companies open up local sales channels, strengthen footprint and enhance consumption avenues

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chen Han, 26, operates a toy factory in Shantou, Guangdong province. The factory, founded by his parents more than 10 years ago, receives trade orders from abroad and used to supply various types of toys for brands and dealers in the United States.

However, the US government's recent move to increase tariffs on imports from China and other trade partners has raised export costs for the Chinese toy manufacturer and prompted it to seek out new channels and markets to boost sales.

Chen, general manager of Shantou Qilong Toys Co Ltd, said his company's production was relatively stable in March, but the number of orders declined in April. "Some of our US clients have canceled orders due to the increased tariffs," he said.

Currently, orders from the US account for about 30 percent of the company's total, and that from Southeast Asia and European countries make up for 40 percent, while the domestic market takes up about 30 percent.

The toymaker is expanding sales channels to reach more domestic consumers and alleviate inventory pressures by leveraging e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba Group's business-to-business trading website 1688.

The site provides Chen with useful guidance and suggestions, including store operations, pricing and marketing strategies.

"We are actively expanding our presence in some emerging markets, such as South America and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to diversify our business layout globally, reduce overreliance on a single market and hedge against external shocks," Chen said.

He noted that artificial intelligence will significantly bolster technological innovation, product iteration and industrial upgrades in the homegrown toy sector. "Looking ahead, we will design more customized products containing innovative digital technologies in accordance with the preference of local consumers."

Chen is among millions of young Chinese entrepreneurs who are capitalizing on domestic online marketplaces to expand sales channels, and marching into more diversified overseas markets to secure new orders and rev up sales amid a complicated external environment.

Major Chinese e-commerce platforms have ramped up efforts to help the country's exporters sell their products at home, expand domestic demand and relieve export pressures, as part of a broader push to mitigate the effect of US tariff increases.

Experts said the supportive measures will help export-oriented companies open up the domestic market, strengthen domestic circulation and boost consumption, while further unleashing the vitality and potential of China's ultra-large consumer market.

Alibaba Group's online marketplaces Taobao and Tmall have announced it will provide assistance to at least 10,000 Chinese companies involved in foreign trade and promote domestic sales of 100,000 foreign trade goods, helping exporters shift their focus to the domestic market.

Detailed measures include simplified registration, commission incentives, localized sales guidance, data traffic support and direct procurement services.

Taobao and Tmall have cooperated with more than 20 local authorities nationwide to carry out special activities, including



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

investment promotion and training sessions for export-oriented companies. At present, more than 20,000 exporters have completed the process — covering entry, product listing, and operation and sales on the platforms.

1688 has rolled out a series of relief measures for enterprises facing obstacles in export, such as commission fee reductions, as well as loans and subsidies, while offering merchants and buyers free access to AI-powered digital tools.

Guangdong province-based company Zhuhai Kingdom Electrical Appliance Co Ltd has for long been exporting products such as hair steamers, facial steamers and beauty instruments, and is popular among European and US consumers.

Ma Hong, general manager of the company, said sales from overseas markets account for 60 percent of its total, among which the proportion of the US exceeds 50 percent. "We are facing severe challenges due to the impact of US tariff policies, as nearly 100,000 units of products have been overstocked."

After learning about the demand, Chinese e-commerce giant JD sent a purchasing and sales team focused on personal care appli-

ances to the company.

"Within just half a day, they helped us select over 10,000 products that could be immediately sold on the platforms," Ma said, adding that the team will assist the company in selling the first batch of products as soon as possible by adding Chinese instruction manuals.

The move is part of JD's recent commitment to purchase 200 billion yuan (\$27.6 billion) worth of goods from exporters over the next year to help them sell products domestically. It has sent professional procurement teams to foreign trade companies and directly purchased their high-quality products.

JD announced plans to establish a special area on its online marketplaces to sell select goods and provide data traffic and omnichannel marketing support for exporters, while providing training, increasing subsidies and offering other resources and support for exporters to quickly boost domestic sales.

The company said foreign trade enterprises that have been expanding their footprint overseas for several years boast strong production capabilities and high-quality products. However, in the process of explor-

ing the domestic market, they may encounter challenges like a shortage of operational experience.

Meanwhile, Chinese online retailer Vipshop has established a "green channel" for enterprises facing obstacles in exporting clothing and has offered all-around support, including quicker review and entry services, specialized online sales zones and more traffic aid for high-quality products to help apparel merchants expand domestic sales channels.

It provides digital tools related to product selection and marketing decisions, and customized sales plans during major e-commerce promotional events such as "618" and "Double 11", while simplifying the management rules for exporters.

Online discounter PDD Holdings has launched plans to invest 100 billion yuan over the next three years, including stepping up subsidy support for small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in cross-border e-commerce to stabilize their production and help them cope with external challenges in overseas expansion.

Zhou Zhiyu runs a company producing various types of kitchenware in Yongkang, Zhejiang province, with exports account-

ing for about 50 percent of its total sales. Zhou said he is planning to shift the company's business focus to Europe and Southeast Asia.

Zhou said he is also expanding the domestic market, especially in building its self-owned brand. The company has registered with Pinduoduo, and established an e-commerce team under the guidance of the platform to develop products tailor-made for domestic consumers.

At present, sales from Pinduoduo make up for about 50 percent of the company's online sales, Zhou said, adding that the company will lift the proportion of domestic sales in the future.

Zhuang Shuai, founder of Bailian Consulting and an expert in e-commerce and retail, said the US tariff hikes have forced Chinese exporters to realign their strategies and explore the domestic market. This is a response to the "dual-circulation" development pattern, which takes the domestic market as the mainstay while allowing domestic and international markets to reinforce each other.

"In the short term, these supportive measures will help foreign trade companies tide over difficulties, while in the long run, they will be conducive to cultivating a new consumption ecosystem as the deep integration of foreign trade enterprises with the domestic consumption market may nurture more homegrown brands with international competitiveness."

Zhuang said foreign trade companies, which boast advanced manufacturing capabilities that have long served the US markets, can fill the supply gap of the domestic medium and high-end consumption market, thus pushing Chinese-made products to move toward the higher end of the value chain.

Liu Junbin, a special researcher at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy, said the intensified efforts to support foreign trade enterprises will strongly boost China's consumption market and provide domestic consumers with a more diverse range of high-quality products to meet their expanding needs in pursuit of a better life.

Liu said these exporters are more familiar with overseas markets, and need to learn about demands from the domestic market, including e-commerce and supermarket sales channels, and adjust their production models in a timely manner.

Chinese logistics companies have also taken steps to help exporters mitigate the impact of US tariff policies. Cainiao Group has announced the launch of a cross-border "green channel" to help the country's exporters expand their footprint abroad.

Leveraging its network of over 40 overseas warehouses in Europe, the US, Southeast Asia and Australia, Cainiao said it aims to not only assist traders in diversifying their business operations globally, but also in building flexible and agile supply chain models by utilizing its warehouses in Vietnam and Mexico.

The construction of overseas warehouses will effectively avoid cost increases caused by tariff fluctuations through advanced stockpiling and localized operations, and help Chinese merchants better adapt to local markets, said Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Through intelligent inventory management and data analysis, merchants can flexibly adjust sales strategies, respond quickly to market changes and cushion the impact of policy changes in any particular market, Hong added.

Shopping gala set to meet consumer demand for quality goods

REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

This year's June 18 online shopping carnival — also known as "618" — has kicked off one week earlier than previously.

Scrolling through cross-border e-commerce platforms such as JD Worldwide and Tmall Global, I filled my shopping carts with imported items, ranging from outdoor camping equipment, hand-drip coffee products to kitchen utensils.

For the midway shopping festival, major online retailers have offered steep discounts and shopping subsidies on a wide range of imported and foreign-branded products, simplifying promotional methods with direct price cuts as a

preferred strategy to woo price-sensitive consumers.

I also bought some fresh produce for my parents, including Chilean cherries, Norwegian salmon and New Zealand milk, all of which will be delivered to their home in just a few days. The cross-border online shopping is very convenient, and the products seem worth the price I paid for them.

Nowadays, a rising number of Chinese shoppers are embracing cross-border online marketplaces for high-quality and diverse imported items, driven by enhanced logistics efficiencies and a series of preferential policies such as lower tariffs, and an expanded list of imported goods.

It is undeniable that China's cross-border e-commerce sector has been growing exponentially over the past few years, as the nation's middle and high-income shoppers are inclined to buy diversified, personalized and niche commodities.

Industry experts told me that price, selection of products and logistics are the most

important factors Chinese consumers consider while buying imported products. The platforms that can offer diverse products at competitive prices, fast delivery and good shopping experiences will gain an upper hand amid the fierce competition.

According to JD Worldwide's white paper on China cross-border consumption trends 2024, more than 80 percent of Chinese consumers are interested in imported products, with many prioritizing authenticity, quality and fast delivery.

During last year's Singles Day shopping extravaganza, sales of cross-border products on JD's online marketplaces witnessed rapid growth, with the sales of more than 600 brands surging more than 100 percent year-on-year.

People aged between 26 and 35 are the main consumers of imported commodities, accounting for 45 percent of buyers, while consumers in the 46-55 age group have contributed to the fastest growth in purchases of imported products, said a report released

by JD's Consumption and Industry Development Research Institute.

Personal care products, cosmetics and skincare, food and beverages, as well as maternity and infant products are the categories most favored by Chinese consumers purchasing imported goods, the report said.

While residents living in first-tier cities have become the primary purchasers of imported products, consumers in small cities have also shown a growing interest in buying such commodities.

The country's cross-border e-commerce market hit 2.63 trillion yuan (\$363.4 billion) in 2024, a year-on-year increase of 10.8 percent, said the General Administration of Customs.

"Young Chinese consumers, especially Gen Z — those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s — think and judge independently while choosing brands, and prefer to pursue niche lifestyles and personalized products," said Li Yanchuan, head of Amazon China Global Store and Prime.

Li noted that sales of fishing, skiing, camping and other outdoor sporting equipment have witnessed rapid growth, while virtual reality equipment, healthcare and nutritional goods have been favored by Chinese shoppers in recent years.

Moreover, China has been optimizing the list of imported retail goods for cross-border e-commerce. A total of 29 product categories with strong demand from consumers, including ski gear, dishwashers and tomato juice have been added to the list, according to a statement jointly issued by the Ministry of Finance and seven other central government departments.

Zhang Zhouping, an independent analyst who has been tracking the cross-border e-commerce sector for more than a decade, said cross-border e-commerce has played a significant role in enriching product supply, bolstering the recovery of consumption, and catering to the needs of consumers.

Online shopping via livestreaming videos — an easy way for domestic consumers to find detailed information on overseas products — is popular among the post-1980s and post-1990s generations, he added.

BUSINESS



A saleswoman handles a bag to a customer at Shein's "Spring Boutique" temporary store in Milan, Italy, on March 23, 2024. EMANUELE CREMASCHI / GETTY IMAGES

E-commerce platforms to adjust supply chains, logistics networks

Localized operations in overseas markets allow retailers to expand global reach

By FAN FEIFEI
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The United States' move to eliminate de minimis treatment for small packages and low-value imports from China will prompt Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms to adjust supply chains and logistics networks, speed up the establishment of overseas warehouses and diversify layouts in emerging markets, experts said.

Shein and Temu, two Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms offering a wide selection of merchandise at competitive prices, recently raised prices for US consumers.

The two platforms said recent changes in global trade rules and tariffs have caused their operational expenses to go up, making the price increases necessary.

The de minimis exemption allowed items valued at up to \$800 and sent from China via postal service to enter the US duty free and with minimal inspections. The Trump administration decided to end the duty-free de minimis treatment for low-value imports by imposing a tax of 120 percent of the package's value, effective since May 2.

Recently, the US government has

cut the de minimis tariff on low-value packages imported from China to 54 percent from 120 percent. A \$100 flat fee will also apply to the packages, down from a \$200 fee set to come into effect by June.

The two Chinese online discount retailers have taken steps to buffer against the impact of the revocation of the small-package tax exemption.

Shein has opened distribution centers and a supply chain hub in the US, and started to diversify its supply chain, adding more suppliers from Brazil. It has expanded its presence in European countries including Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Spain, as part of a broader push to explore diversified markets and work with local manufacturing suppliers.

Temu, which is owned by Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings, last year began adding Chinese sellers to its site that have inventory at US warehouses, allowing it to ship packages faster to shoppers in the US.

He Yadong, spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, said at a recent news conference in Beijing that China firmly opposes the US' decision to eliminate the de minimis exemption, as the move harms the interests of enterprises and consumers in both countries.

He noted that cross-border e-commerce meets the personalized needs of consumers in various countries with unique advantages of high efficiency, fast delivery and low costs, highlighting that the de minimis trade exemption will not stop the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the elimination of de minimis exemption and increased duties on small packages will push Chinese cross-border online marketplaces to expand sales channels and optimize supply chain management to reduce dependence on a single market.

Hong said Chinese e-commerce platforms should invest more in establishing overseas warehousing, accelerate steps to expand their footprint in more diverse and emerging markets, and strengthen cooperation with international logistics enterprises to improve delivery efficiency and lower logistics costs.

As an important practice supporting the development of cross-border e-commerce, overseas warehouses allow domestic retailers to transport commodities in bulk to overseas locations in advance, which is conducive to lowering shipping costs and facilitating the efficient delivery of goods to consumers

abroad, market observers said.

The development of overseas warehouses has been high on the government's agenda. China will advance the construction of overseas warehouses and expand cross-border e-commerce exports to accelerate the cultivation of new growth drivers for foreign trade, according to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Commerce and other government departments last year.

Zhang Zhouping, an independent analyst who has been tracking the cross-border e-commerce sector for more than a decade, said that the recent US policy shift will not only result in reduced supply and fewer choices for local consumers, but also have a negative impact on the overall development of the global e-commerce industry.

Zhang said it is of vital significance for Chinese online retailers to strengthen localized operations in overseas markets in order to reduce international transportation costs and expand their global reach to diversified markets such as Southeast Asia, Europe and South America.

"Overseas warehouses serve as vital infrastructure that boost growth in the nation's cross-border e-commerce sector," he said, adding that such facilities enable quicker Customs clearance, faster delivery and lower costs, while safeguarding the stability and security of supply chains.

Smart inspections make grid more stable

By HAN JINGYAN
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In the prefecture-level city of Xiangyang in Hubei province, power technician Zhang Feiran sat in her office on May 1, gazing at the computer screen and pressing the execution button of a drone intelligent-inspection system.

At the 220 kilovolt Dongjin power substation a few kilometers away, a drone nesting inside the substation slowly took off, starting its remote intelligent inspection of the No 2 main transformer.

When the drone's AI intelligent inspection and diagnosis data showed the transformer was running normally, Zhang — from the substation operation and maintenance branch of State Grid Xiangyang Power Supply Co — was quite relieved.

She said: "Through the intelligent inspection, our substation operation and maintenance staff can monitor the real-time operation status of equipment, timely discovering potential problems and avoiding any safety hazards."

"In the past, we had to rely on time-consuming and labor-intensive manual inspection, and naked eyes could not detect everything, but now our Substation Remote Intelligent Inspection System has perfectly solved these issues," she added.

By the end of March this year, all 48 substations under State Grid Xiangyang had completed the installation and commissioning of drone nests, marking start of a "drone patrol era."

Zhang Yu, Zhang Feiran's colleague, stressed: "We are standing at a new starting point of intelligent inspection of our power facilities."

The nation's Government Work Report for this year, delivered during the annual two sessions in Beijing, has called for the development of new-generation intelligent terminals and smart manufacturing equipment.

Since the beginning of the year, as the city's data centers have rapidly expanded their server clusters to meet surging digitalization

demand, power consumption jumped accordingly.

But Ma Deheng, project technical director of the city's data center, was unworried: "Due to the intelligent transformation of the city's power grid, the power supply is more stable, and a zero-interruption experience of our customers' data computing power is fully guaranteed."

The Fantasy Valley in Xiangyang has been enjoying a lively and extraordinary tourism feast ever since mid-April, when the flow of family trips and tailored tour packages increased significantly.

In order to meet the needs of visitors, the park has upgraded its night performances, and demand for electricity has been jumping accordingly. However, Feng Zhiwu, the park manager, has no worry at all.

He noted: "Thanks to the intelligent transformation of the power grid in Xiangyang, the stability of power supply has fully relieved us from any worries."

Zhang Yanyan, director of Jiangbei Central Control Station under State Grid Xiangyang, said: "Whether it is to cope with peak demand for electricity in busy tourism seasons, or to ensure the residents' rising daily power consumption, the new system can help largely upgrade the stability of power supply, providing a vital strong support for the city's tourism development and social benefit."

Wu Junlei, head of Dongjin high-speed railway traction station, was amazed: "A drone flying over Dongjin substation can complete a three-hour manual inspection task in 10 minutes, and even dirt on the power supply equipment can be identified. This is like equipping the high-speed railway with an engine that never cuts off power, and all we need to do is to focus on making each train come and go on time."

The benefits brought by the intelligent inspection on 48 substations were obvious, she said, noting that some 3,212 manual inspection trips and over 2,000 inspection hours can be saved each year.



Technicians from State Grid Xiangyang Power Supply Co prepare for a drone inspection on the 220 kilovolt Qiaoying substation in Xiangyang, Hubei province, on May 1. YANG RUNZE / FOR CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Markets bite back: Bond Vigilantes vs US policies

EAGLE EYE
By Zhao Zhongxiu

Bond Vigilantes" refer to market forces in the bond market that spontaneously correct governments' improper, irrational, and anti-market policies. When authorities implement misguided measures, investors respond by selling government bonds, driving up yields and increasing financing costs for governments. This serves as a powerful warning signal to compel policy adjustments and restore market confidence. The concept was first coined by economist Ed Yardeni in the 1980s.

Following the Trump administration's "Liberation Day" tariffs, among all existing constraint mechanisms observed to date, the swiftest and most forceful reaction emerged almost instinctively from these "Bond Vigilantes" in the US treasury market. Their actions effectively drew red lines against unreasonable and abnormal policies.

At its core, the "Bond Vigilantes" mechanism represents a form of market self-regulation. It demonstrates real-time price feedback from bond assets to misguided policies, embodying characteristics of "spontaneous order". This phenomenon reveals that even when confronting state power, markets retain certain "autonomy" and "disciplinary capabilities".

When institutional constraints fail and political checks weaken, markets may serve as the last line of defense. More fundamentally, the market operates as a collective cognitive system embedded with institutional constraints — it speaks through interest rates and expresses judgments via pricing.

The term "Bond Vigilantes" emerged in close connection with the US fiscal crisis of the 1980s. During this period, ballooning government deficits forced Washington to rely heavily on treasury issuance for financing, triggering investor alarm in bond markets.

A defining case unfolded during the Clinton administration. As bond markets grew increasingly discontent with widening budget shortfalls, investors dumped treasuries, causing yields to spike. From October 1993 to November 1994, the 10-year treasury yield surged from 5.19 percent to 8.05 percent, significantly raising government borrowing costs.

This compelled the Clinton administration to abandon plans such as middle-class tax cuts and pivot to deficit-reducing austerity measures. By October 1998, restored market confidence drove yields down to 4.16 percent.

Recognizing the Bond Vigilantes' role in curbing fiscal excess, Clinton's political adviser James Carville famously quipped: "I used to think that if there was reincarnation, I wanted to come back as the president or the pope. But now I want to come back as the bond market. You can



A glance of US dollar. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Zhao Zhongxiu

intimidate everybody?"

The typical operational logic of "Bond Vigilantes" unfolds as follows: governments or central banks introduce misguided, anti-market policies; markets anticipate rising inflation or unsustainable debt; investors sell government bonds; bond prices fall and yields rise; government financing costs surge, leading to fiscal unsustainability; potential financial crises; forcing policymakers to adjust course.

"Bond Vigilantes" are not organized entities but rather countless bond investors acting in self-interest after losing confidence in government policies. Fearing that inflation or unsustainable debt could erode returns, they collectively dump bonds, driving up yields to penalize irresponsible policymaking.

Well-functioning financial markets are the prerequisite for "Bond Vigilantes" to operate effectively. In such markets, bond prices act like a real-time "poll of money". When governments enact irrational or ill-advised policies, the sovereign debt market casts a "vote with its feet" through mass sell-offs, expressing distrust via spiking yields and compelling policy corrections.

It must be emphasized that the US treasury market holds unique status

as the cornerstone of the global financial system. Compared to US equities, it exerts more direct and profound influence on US policymaking and the global economy, representing an "ironclad constraint" that US policymakers cannot ignore.

This stems from the treasury market's dual role: it not only determines government borrowing costs but also serves as the global anchor for "risk-free assets" and the "risk-free rate". The assumption that US treasuries are "risk-free" underpins global capital pricing, credit risk assessment, and the stability of dollar credibility and the financial system.

Specifically, due to their high liquidity, low risk, and price stability, US treasuries form the bedrock of central bank reserves worldwide and a critical component of institutional safety buffers. Globally, most financial products derive their pricing and interest rates from US treasury yields as the benchmark.

So long as investors maintain faith in treasuries' "risk-free" status, the dollar system and US global dominance endure. Should this premise falter, markets would face a triple shock wave: first, surging treasury yields straining public finances; second, margin call pressures triggering credit and liquidity crises for financial institutions; and in extreme scenarios, widespread doubt about treasuries' "risk-free" status could collapse global pricing anchors, spark capital flight, de-dollarization, and systemic financial meltdowns.

While such doomsday scenarios remain hypothetical, the erosion of treasuries' risk-free aura and the dollar's reserve currency primacy continues unabated, quietly accumulating uncertainties and tangible risks for the future.

On April 2, the Trump administration announced its "Liberation Day" tariff package, including baseline and reciprocal duties set to take effect on April 5 and April 9, respectively. US stocks immediately plunged, shedding over \$6 trillion in market value within two days. President Trump, however, remained unmoved.

Starting from April 5, a sell-off began in the US treasury market, with the 10-year yield surging from 4.1 percent to 4.6 percent — the sharpest weekly rise in two decades. By April 9, panic selling peaked, driving the 30-year yield above 5 percent, a two-year high.

Markets witnessed an unusual "dual sell-off" in stocks and bonds — a departure from historical patterns where safe-haven funds fleeing equities typically flow into Treasuries, boosting bond prices. The simultaneous decline signaled growing investor skepticism about US debt's "risk-free" status. The 10-year term premium briefly hit 0.7 percent, its highest since 2014, reflecting concerns over long-term fiscal sustainability and demands for greater compensation.

These market warnings triggered

swift policy reversals. Within 13 hours of the retaliatory tariffs taking effect, Trump suspended most of them and announced exemptions for critical electronics on April 11, stating: "The bond market is very tricky, I was watching it."

While the sell-off partly stemmed from fears that Trump's tariffs would fuel inflation and recession risks, the deeper catalyst was the market's sudden realization that Trump's radical economic agenda — outlined in the previously dismissed Stephen Miran's "A User's Guide to Restructuring the Global Trading System" — was being implemented. This blueprint proposes using tariffs and geopolitical pressure to force trade partners into accepting dollar devaluation, rebalance deficits, and overhaul global manufacturing and trade systems.

Certain proposals in the report, particularly a plan to pressure foreign economies into swapping short-term US treasuries for ultra-long-term bonds to reduce US interest costs, were seen as unilateral changes to debt terms — a breach of the "technical default" red line. It was this moment that began eroding treasuries' "risk-free" status.

The collective sell-off by "Bond Vigilantes" preemptively priced in potential forced debt restructuring and delivered an institutional rebuke to Washington's policy overreach. Their message was clear: rewriting contracts and undermining market trust carries severe consequences. In this first round of confrontation with Trump's extreme economic agenda, the "Bond Vigilantes" prevailed.

Upon temporary tariff suspension, markets stabilized, yet the US economy faces slowing growth, heightened recession risks, and mounting uncertainty. Eager to boost stocks and create an election-year "economic boom" narrative, Trump has repeatedly pressured Fed Chair Powell to cut rates.

The Federal Reserve, committed to its independent mandate of balancing inflation and growth, has resisted political interference. By mid-April, Trump escalated tactics, threatening to fire Powell and launching legal challenges to overturn precedents protecting Fed officials' tenure — a direct assault on central bank independence.

Fed independence remains critical to economic stability and market trust. Autonomous central banks do better balancing inflation and employment goals without succumbing to policymakers' growth biases. Historical evidence, including the UK's experience, shows independent central banks reduce long-term debt costs. For US treasuries, Fed autonomy is a cornerstone of their perceived risk-free status.

Trump's attacks triggered renewed bond sell-offs, yield spikes, and a rare "triple sell-off" in stocks, bonds, and the dollar. Capital flight emerged as the dollar index fell to a three-year low by April 21. Facing market backlash, Trump reversed course that same day, pledging to retain Powell and consider tariff reductions on Chinese goods. Markets responded positively, with equities, bonds, and the dollar rebounding.

Within weeks, "Bond Vigilantes" twice forced Trump to retreat, underscoring a fundamental truth: In a global economy anchored by trust, prices speak louder than rhetoric. Markets remain the ultimate constraint mechanism in modern governance.

By the end of February, the outstanding US Treasury debt had reached \$36 trillion, or 120 percent of US GDP. As much as \$28 trillion is tradable debt, with foreign official institutions, including central banks, holding about \$3.8 trillion. Japan and Chinese mainland's official holdings stood at \$1.1 trillion and \$780 billion, respectively, down 14 percent and 24 percent over the past three years.

For China, reducing holdings of US treasuries could, in theory, signal strategic discontent to Washington. However, such a move is not without risk. First, it could be interpreted by the US as a confrontational gesture, potentially triggering retaliatory measures. Second, abrupt divestment could undermine China's own financial stability and compromise its objectives of balancing reserve security with portfolio returns. As a result, most analysts view a gradual, managed reallocation as a more prudent approach.

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Auto revolution: Consumers behind wheel, automakers best buckle up

MAIN STREET
By Guan Mingyu

The roar from China's auto market isn't just the sound of engines — it's the collective voice of increasingly empowered motorists, rewriting the rules of engagement for automakers worldwide. For decades, the playbook was simple: establish a brand, offer a competitive price and watch the sales roll in. But those days are long gone. China is now a dynamic arena where consumers' requirements for technology, personalization and practicality are shaping the future of the auto sector. And if you aren't paying attention, you're already falling behind.

Price isn't everything

Forget the price wars. For years,

the narrative revolved around affordability, with automakers slashing prices to capture market share. But that era is fading. Our latest research shows that as household incomes rise, consumers are more willing to pay for leading innovative technologies. They want cutting-edge features like advanced driver-assistance systems, sophisticated infotainment, seamless connectivity and other cutting-edge bells and whistles. Price still matters, but it's no longer the deciding factor.

Homegrown brands rise

Foreign brands that dominated the internal combustion engine era are struggling to maintain their edge. At the same time, Chinese automakers are rising, investing heavily in electric vehicle technology and tailoring their offerings to local preferences. These homegrown brands are not just building cars, they are also building brands that resonate with a new genera-

tion of Chinese drivers. Their agility and innovation are gaining significant market share, forcing foreign automakers to rethink their strategies. The rise of these domestic brands is a clear indication that the future of the automotive industry in China is being shaped by local innovation and consumer-driven design.

Practicality over idealism

While the initial excitement around electric vehicles was high, Chinese consumers are now taking a more pragmatic approach. While battery electric vehicles still hold appeal, particularly in major urban centers, consumers are increasingly turning to plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and range-extended electric vehicle. Some BEV owners are considering switching back to ICE vehicles, and the proportion of such owners is increasing. However, PHEVs and REEVs are becoming increasingly popular due to their more convenient charging

and their ability to alleviate range anxiety.

This shift highlights a crucial point: Chinese consumers are not driven by pure technological idealism. They want practical solutions that address their real-world needs. Charging anxiety is a significant concern in a country with a rapidly developing but still uneven charging infrastructure. PHEVs and REEVs offer a compelling compromise, providing the benefits of electric driving without the limitations of a BEV. Automakers who ignore this trend risk being left behind. The future isn't just electric, it's practicality.

Personalization is key

Chinese consumers want cars that are tailored to their individual needs and lifestyles. They demand customized functions, such as advanced ADAS and smartphone integration for city dwellers, spacious interiors and enhanced safety features for families. An adventur-

ous individual might prioritize off-road capabilities and a rugged design. The wave of technological democratization that has emerged with the spread of intelligent technologies is driving "scenario-based" applications, making it crucial for automakers to create specifically tailored experiences. This means shifting from a product-centric to a customer-centric approach, thus putting the motorist at the heart of every decision, from design and engineering to marketing and sales.

Cultural sensitivity matters

Understanding Chinese consumers also means understanding their values and cultural nuances. Chinese consumers are increasingly proud of their culture and heritage, and they want to support brands that reflect those values. This means that automakers must be culturally sensitive and avoid any missteps that could alienate their target audience.

The future of China's auto market, and potentially the global auto mar-

ket, hinges on the ability of automakers to adapt to the changing needs and demands of Chinese consumers. It's a testing ground for new ideas and technologies, where automakers are experimenting and pushing boundaries. The lessons learned in China will have a profound impact on the global automotive industry, shaping the cars of the future and redefining the way we think about transportation.

Those who cling to the old playbook will be left behind. Those who embrace innovation, personalization and a customer-centric approach will thrive. Chinese consumers are driving, and automakers better buckle up. The ride is going to be wild and transformative. The question is: are you ready?

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COMMENT

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Wielding tariffs to impose law of the jungle blindly ignores benefits of mutual respect

The transatlantic partnership, long regarded as the backbone of the global economic order, is at a perilous crossroads. Last week's threat by US President Donald Trump to impose a 50 percent tariff on European goods has drawn pushback from Brussels.

After the US president released a blunt social media post claiming the European Union was exploiting the United States in trade agreements and describing Brussels as "being very difficult to deal with", EU officials and member state representatives responded with a firm line, warning that such coercive tactics could derail critical trade talks and ignite an avoidable economic conflict.

The threat to implement the tariff on June 1 clearly shows the US president is intensifying his tariff tactics in his second term, as highlighted by his threat to hit Apple with a 25 percent tariff on its iPhones unless they are manufactured in the US.

Expounding on the latest tariff proposals, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a Fox News interview that the tariffs are not all about trade per se, he said that one of the US' greatest vulnerabilities is external production, especially in semiconductors, "so we would like to have Apple help us make the semiconductor supply chain more secure".

Experts have pointed out, however, that moving iPhone production back to the US is as unrealistic as a fairy tale. As Apple CEO Tim Cook recently said, "People think we're in China for low labor cost. We're not. China stopped being the low-labor cost country many years ago." He said that Apple's supply chain decisions are rooted in the reality that no country in the world offers the same level of manufacturing talent, scalability and coordination as China.

The European response to the tariff threat has been unusually forceful and unified. Valdis Dombrovskis, European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, declared that "trade relations must be rooted in mutual respect, not ultimatums", asserting Brussels' willingness to engage constructively but refusing to capitulate to unilateral demands.

Apart from hurting its global trading relations, the adverse impact of the US trade war is also having a negative impact on US consumers who are bearing the brunt of the high costs as

retailers have issued warnings that they will not, as Trump has suggested, "eat" the additional costs caused by the import taxes. US retailers such as Walmart, Mattel and Best Buy have announced that they will raise prices because of Trump's tariffs.

Trump's approach reflects a transactional style of diplomacy — one that prioritizes pressure over partnership and short-term posturing over long-term stability. Yet as EU leaders have made clear, this strategy risks far more than stalled negotiations: it threatens the integrity of a relationship that has underpinned global prosperity for decades. The US demands unilateral concessions from the EU to widen market access for American businesses, while Europe seeks a balanced agreement that upholds mutual interests and shared rules.

The planned visit of EU lawmakers to Washington offers an opportunity to reset negotiations. But only if the US recognizes that Europe cannot — and will not — sacrifice regulatory sovereignty or its social-market model to accommodate US companies, nor its trade relations with China at the behest of the US. The EU too will be required to demonstrate pragmatic flexibility, particularly in areas such as the digital trade and critical minerals, where alignment could unlock growth.

But the fundamental difference is the EU's emphasis on "reciprocity" in trade talks underscores its broader strategy of preserving the rules-based international order. By contrast, Washington's zero-sum tactics risk fragmenting the very system that has amplified US influence for decades.

The US president's trade policies have already triggered rounds of significant global market volatility and fueled concerns about a potential recession. It is high time Washington woke up to the truth that unilateralism and tariff coercion will only bring back the "law of the jungle" and make everyone a victim, including itself.

Instead of being a boost for US companies, the "beauty" of tariffs is misleading, as they have entrenched the inefficiencies and diminished the competitiveness of US manufacturers.

In an interconnected global economy, resorting to protectionism is not a way to show strength, but rather a sign of shortsightedness and self-isolation.

Harvard displaying 'guts, vision and backbone'

Trying to crack the hard nut of the disoriented Harvard is part of the Donald Trump administration's broader systematic campaign to compel universities, law firms, news media, courts and other institutions that value their independence to align with its agenda.

In announcing on Thursday the termination of Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification, effective starting in the 2025-2026 academic year, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, without providing evidence, accused the university of fostering violence, antisemitism, and coordinating with China. It signals the US administration's de facto purge of any element in US society it deems to be opposing its agenda.

Earlier last week, some US lawmakers wrote to Harvard President Alan Garber, asking the school to explain its ties to the Chinese government and military.

But the baseless China-related allegations only serve to expose the Republican administration is trying to distract public attention from the true cause, which is its attempts to muffle opposition to its biased Middle East policies.

As Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, China has always opposed the politicization of educational cooperation and opposed unwarranted attacks and smears against China.

Harvard's strong opposition to the administration's decision is understandable. The most prominent private academic and cultural institution that was founded in 1636, 140 years earlier than the founding of the US, and a cradle of eight US presidents, firmly believes that at this juncture it is obliged to not only take a stand in defense of its own principles of academic freedom and independence, but also as the conscience of the country.

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the university and its mission," Harvard said in statement.

In a complaint filed in the Boston federal court on Friday, Harvard called the revocation a "blatant violation" of the US Constitution and other

federal laws, that had an "immediate and devastating effect" on the university and more than 7,000 visa holders.

It is good to see that the court responded to Harvard's appeal positively and promptly. A US district judge, Allison Burroughs, issued a temporary restraining order the same day, freezing the administration's policy that aims to revoke Harvard's ability to enroll foreign students.

But the court's move has ratcheted up the White House's efforts to have all institutions conform with the president's policies, including attacking the judge himself.

In a statement, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said, "unelected judges have no right to stop the Trump Administration from exercising their rightful control over immigration policy and national security policy".

There will be an injunction hearing on Thursday, a court filing showed. That will be a critical moment that determines whether Harvard can withstand the ongoing wave of attacks.

After some other institutions caved in to the administration's pressure, the legal dispute between Harvard and the Republican administration represents the culmination of the struggle between the two contending forces of liberalism and conservatism in the divided US society.

The US president used the first service academy commencement address of his second term on Saturday to laud graduating West Point cadets for their accomplishments and career choice. But, amid the legal brawl with the most prestigious university of the country, that West Point speech was apparently a beat-around-the-bush call to the younger generation of Americans indicating to them what kind of person the Republican administration would like them to become.

"This is a time of incredible change and we do not need an officer corps of careerists and yes men. We need patriots with guts and vision and backbone," Trump said.

But the administration should be reminded that the "guts, vision and backbone" it calls for to realize its MAGA objective is being demonstrated by Harvard now.

Shi Yu

INVESTMENT IN THE US



SHIYU CHINADAILY

Opinion Line

China-ASEAN-GCC summit quiet development revolution

Against the backdrop of the rising unilateralism, protectionism and turmoil in the world, the contemporary value of the Bandung Spirit has become more prominent. Chinese Premier Li Qiang reinforced this enduring principle during his address at the Indonesia-China Business Reception 2025 on Saturday, ahead of his participation in the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-GCC (the Gulf Cooperation Council)-China Summit in Malaysia from Monday to Wednesday. His message echoed the same vital truth that guided nations seven decades ago: true progress comes through solidarity forged in dialogue, development achieved through cooperation, and prosperity.

Premier Li emphasized that China and Indonesia have consistently adhered to the Bandung Spirit, engaging in comprehensive and pragmatic cooperation. China-Indonesia cooperation has reached a new level, with bilateral trade expanding in scale and quality.

Li highlighted that China's technological advancements in AI, robotics, and biomedicine are driving innovation across industries and providing new opportunities for global collaboration. Moreover, China's push for high-end, intelligent, and green manufacturing upgrades presents significant opportunities for joint supply chain development.

The world stands at a crossroads. Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and zero-sum mentalities threaten to unravel decades of economic progress.

China's commitment to this vision is evident in its engagement with ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Rather than imposing dominance, Beijing champions consultation, whether in bridging infrastructure gaps, stabilizing trade or fostering green innovation. For example, China and ASEAN jointly announced on Tuesday the official conclusion of talks for the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. It encompasses 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.

In December 2022, the first China-GCC summit was held in Saudi Arabia. China pledged to work with GCC countries to prioritize cooperation in energy, finance and investment, innovation, science and technology, aerospace, as well as language and cultural fields.

China and GCC countries are natural partners of cooperation with strong economic complementarities, as China has a vast consumer market and a complete industrial system, while the GCC,

with rich energy resources, is embracing diversified economic development.

The inaugural ASEAN-GCC-China Summit marks a pivotal moment in South-South cooperation, bringing together three major economic forces of the Global South. What makes this partnership unique is its rejection of bloc confrontation in favor of pragmatic synergy.

The ASEAN-GCC-China partnership embodies a quiet revolution in international relations: one where development is not dictated but co-created, where growth is not extracted but multiplied. Amid the complex global landscape, this trilateral dialogue carries profound significance as the three parties explore pathways toward greater solidarity, cooperative development and shared prosperity while advancing cross-regional collaboration.

China stands ready to deepen substantive cooperation with ASEAN and GCC nations across multiple domains, capitalizing on the three sides' complementary strengths to deliver tangible mutual benefits. Just as a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, "We are committed to strengthening the multilateral trade framework and protecting the collective interests of developing nations in pursuit of common development goals."

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

'Gladiatorial show' undermines integrity of sports

The "Enhanced Games", which will hold its inaugural competition for May 2026 in Las Vegas, with swimming, athletics and weightlifting on the agenda, is nothing but part of the US-backed publicity campaign against the World Anti-Doping Agency amid high tensions between the United States Anti-Doping Agency and the global anti-doping body.

The "Enhanced Games" is meant to be the first event of its kind to support so-called performance-enhancing drugs and not follow the rules of the WADA, according to its founder. Founded by London-based Australian businessman Aron D'Souza, the event would allow athletes to use "performance-enhancing substances" without being subject to drug tests. According to D'Souza, athletes are entitled to do what they wish with their own bodies, and the International Olympic Committee is "corrupt" and not paying them enough.

Last year, at a conference in Oxford on human enhancement, D'Souza told a crowd of scientists, athletes and investors: "Every great moment in history begins somewhere." The Economist calls him the "brash" billionaire behind the "doping Olympics" who wants to push forward "human evolution".

It is no coincidence that the initiative was first proposed by the organization bearing the same name of the Games headed by the businessman in December 2024, shortly after the conflict between WADA and USADA

over some suspected doping scandals of US athletes was made public, which prompted a bipartisan group of US lawmakers looking for reforms at WADA to reintroduce a bill that would give the White House permanent authority to withhold money from the global drug-fighting agency.

But it was not until the inauguration of the Republican administration that the organization claimed it had secured enough funding for the initiative that had met with fierce opposition from anti-doping agencies worldwide, except USADA, and the international sports community.

In February, the US president's son said that his venture fund 1789 Capital would be involved in an investment round, saying "The Enhanced Games represent the future — real competition, real freedom, and real records being smashed."

The US leader's open endorsement of the initiative proved a turning point accelerating its transformation from an idea into reality. And some athletes have already started taking drugs regularly to enhance their performance for the competition. Australian swimmer and Olympic medalist James Magnussen said in February 2024 that he intends to come out of retirement to compete in the games.

WADA condemned the "Enhanced Games" as "dangerous and irresponsible" on Thursday, a day after the organization announced its inaugural 2026 event in the US.

WADA warns athletes and support

personnel who wish to participate in sport regulated by the World Anti-Doping Code, that if they were to take part in the "Enhanced Games", they would risk committing anti-doping rule violations.

"They would also put their reputations on the line, as they would risk forever being associated with doping," WADA said in a statement.

That should be a common voice of all the sensible minds on the matter. As the China Anti-Doping Agency said in a statement on the Games, the global sports community should maintain a consistent position and firmly oppose any attempt to portray doping as so-called scientific advancements.

The "Enhanced Games" is a gimmick where opposition to any attempt to portray doping as so-called scientific advancements and speculators collude to scratch each other's back at the cost of sportsmanship, athletes' health and public integrity.

The muted mouth of USADA over the Games exposes its weakness in the face of powerful interest groups and wealthy sponsors. As China Anti-Doping Agency urged in its statement, the USADA is obliged to abide by the World Anti-Doping Code and international standards, take resolute measures to boycott the event, and maintain the stability, consistency and development of the global anti-doping governance system.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT


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 China and the World Roundtable | Public Health

Editor's note: Effective health system governance is essential to ensure healthcare services are equitable, efficient, of high quality, and accessible and affordable for all. It is also important to take effective measures to reduce the impact of climate change on human health to build a healthy society. Five experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Zhang Baichao and Han Qinmei

Reducing climate impact on human health

The increasing frequency of extreme weather and other climate-related events caused by climate change is affecting human health in multiple ways. Climate change is increasing the spread of infectious diseases; by directly impacting communicable diseases and indirectly altering vectors. Rising temperatures and pollution are directly impacting human health by contributing, through complex mechanisms, to increased incidences of cardiovascular, respiratory and other diseases. Changes in vectors due to climate change are influencing the transmission of infectious diseases. While frequent extreme weather events, leading to major natural disasters, also pose significant mental health risks, environmental effects of climate change like reduced crop yield and water shortage threaten people's health and livelihoods.

For instance, changes in temperature patterns and atmospheric pressure, along with extreme weather events like heatwaves and cold spells, directly threaten human cardiovascular and respiratory systems, while heat waves overload the human thermoregulatory mechanism and exacerbate pre-existing organ and tissue dysfunction, thereby increasing the risk of respiratory and circulatory diseases. Cold spells, on their part, induce vasoconstriction (narrowing of blood vessels), raising blood pressure and increasing platelet count, and cholesterol and fibrinogen levels, all of which aggravate cardiovascular and cerebrovascular dysfunction.

Cases of mosquito-borne diseases including dengue and malaria are increasing at a rapid pace across most parts of the world. Shifts in environmental variables, including temperatures, relative humidity and precipitation, combined with growing human mobility have made vectors even more resistant, leading to rising cases even in regions earlier untouched by certain diseases (in high-altitude regions for instance). Besides, increasing



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air pollution, wildfires and prolonged exposure to extreme heat is increasing airborne allergen concentrations, thereby impairing people's respiratory system. Climate change is also prolonging the pollen season and increasing pollen allergenicity, while extreme weather events like thunderstorms, with frequent lightning strikes, are fracturing pollens into smaller particles, increasing the risk of asthma attacks.

To address climate change-related health risks, countries worldwide are taking proactive, complementary measures. However, to overcome all the challenges created by climate change, countries have to implement long-term measures to transform their economies by making their power and industrial sectors eco-friendly and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, many countries have intensified their efforts to address climate-related health risks, with the World Health Organization according priority to addressing the climate-health challenges, playing a leadership role in highlighting the impacts of climate change on human health.

Through initiatives like the framework for building climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems, the WHO has been urging countries to integrate health adaptation measures into their climate-action strategy and allot more funds to combat climate change.

The WHO also spearheads the "Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health" to provide targeted support for health ministries of countries. The initiative focuses on fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, updating technical guidelines, organizing practical training programs, supporting project preparation and implementation, and securing dedicated climate-health financing.

The ATACH initiative has already established effective operational mechanisms in areas such as financial support mobilization, scientific research collaboration and pilot project implementation. These efforts

have significantly advanced both research and practical applications in the climate-health field while strengthening interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation, turning the initiative into a robust support platform for advancing the global climate-health agenda.

Moreover, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (or COP) has progressively integrated public health issues into the critical discussed topics and advanced numerous public health policies combining climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. COP28 was a milestone as it held the first "Health Day", and adopted the "COP28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health", which calls on all countries to address health threats including extreme heat, air pollution, infectious diseases and food insecurity while placing health at the core of their climate action.

The COP28 agreement also achieved a breakthrough by calling for "transitioning away from all fossil fuels", highlighting renewable energy and low-carbon technologies' crucial role in reducing air pollution.

Before the opening of COP29 in Azerbaijan last year, the WHO released two key documents — the COP29 Special Report on Climate Change and Health: Health is the Argument for Climate Action and Quality criteria for integrating health into Nationally Determined Contributions — which emphasize the importance of integrating public health considerations into climate action.

The international community has embraced a health-centered climate action framework, integrating adaptation and mitigation strategies. By further fostering cross-sector collaboration, promoting innovation and deepening global cooperation on climate action, the international community can more systematically address the climate-health challenge. For that, however, the industrialized countries have to fulfill their promise of contributing to the global climate fund and transferring technologies to developing countries to help the latter better combat climate change.

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Ricardo Baptista Leite

Equitable medical access through smart technology

International healthcare systems are under increasing strain, facing challenges ranging from aging populations to the rising burden of chronic diseases and inadequate access to medical care. While each country grapples with its own set of issues, there are common aspects that transcend borders: inefficiency, accessibility and cost. In China, whose nearly one-third of the population is expected to be 60 or above by 2035, the challenge is particularly severe.

The good news is that AI-driven innovations are already making an impact, from specialized testing centers to advanced diagnostic systems implemented across hospitals. These advancements highlight AI's potential to transform public health systems. Yet AI and digital health tools will only be as effective as the systems that support them.

AI allows a country's healthcare system to zero in on the most pressing issues, preventing dispersion of resources across uncoordinated, unsuccessful efforts. This focus is especially crucial for rural communities, low-income groups and people in rapidly urbanizing regions, which often suffer from under-resourced healthcare infrastructure and the perpetual challenge of infectious diseases. In such environments, healthcare practitioners are constantly burdened by systemic flaws, which limit their ability to fully concentrate on patient care.

When something as fundamental as diagnosis becomes a challenge, with the misdiagnosis rate in China averaging 30 percent, AI intervention is making a significant difference. AI-powered remote diagnosis systems in rural areas have already reduced misdiagnosis by 63 percent, demonstrating the transformative potential of AI.

Capacity strain, another major hindrance to building resilient healthcare systems globally, finds solace in AI integration. It's not uncommon for hospitals in high-demand areas to be characterized by unsustainable ratios like 820,000 annual outpatient visits with just 136 physicians in the cardiology department, as in the case of the Zhongshan Hospital. AI-driven solutions are being integrated for diagnosing and treating cardiovascular diseases.

Even in smaller, local hospitals such as the one in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, AI integration is helping improve health outcomes, having already served thousands of patients since its opening last year.

From national initiatives such as the "AI Plus" program, which promotes standardized infrastructure and data sharing to regional efforts like Shanghai's strategy to boost AI in drug development and clinical decision-making, China is at the forefront of a multi-tiered push to make healthcare more equitable.

Similarly, Brazil's Unified Healthcare System has integrated AI technologies to enhance disease diagnosis, personalized treatment plans, and remote patient supervision, underscoring the potential of AI to improve healthcare delivery in diverse settings.

Needless to say, such transformative technologies also require strong, responsive regulatory mechanisms that can balance the pace of advancement with the need to protect individuals and communities from any potential harm. The regulation of AI, being a critical concern for policymakers, technologists and healthcare system leaders alike, requires concerted global efforts to ensure such technologies don't exacerbate existing inequalities or leave vulnerable groups behind.

Moreover, a responsible and inclusive AI-driven health system holds the greatest promise for underserved and vulnerable populations, many of whom live in areas where bridging the healthcare gaps remain both a critical challenge and an opportunity for innovation.

Also, cross-border collaboration allows different countries to pool resources, reduce duplication of efforts and jointly invest in AI research and development, thereby aligning efforts and speeding up progress. Working together supports standardized, interoperable systems while ensuring that no single player shoulders the financial and technical burdens alone. By co-developing AI solutions, countries can design healthcare models that improve both efficiency and access, solving country-specific issues with cross-border potential.

To ensure the responsible use of AI in healthcare, it is essential to recognize that the impact of a single development or failure in one part of the world can have global reverberations. This makes robust mechanisms, such as the Global Early Warning System for post-market surveillance being developed by HealthAI, all the more crucial for addressing potential adverse events.

Encouragingly, China is already moving in this direction. Its general AI regulatory landscape has taken shape through a dynamic policymaking process that involves not just the State but also academics, middle-level officials and policy researchers. What's needed now is to extend this momentum into healthcare, a sector where the stakes are particularly high. So the margin for error there needs to be exceedingly slim.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Soumya Swaminathan and Harkabir Singh Jandu

Bright path ahead for AI and public wellness

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and digital health technologies is revolutionizing global healthcare. These innovative tools present unparalleled opportunities to enhance the efficiency and equity of healthcare systems worldwide. But to achieve these goals, it is necessary to overcome substantial challenges, encompassing technological, ethical, and governance issues, particularly in the context of global disruptions such as the United States' withdrawal from the World Health Organization, geopolitical tensions and a weakening of multilateral collaboration.

Today, AI is becoming increasingly embedded in the entire spectrum of medicine. In research and development, AI is massively accelerating drug discovery and enzyme design by predicting protein structures at pace and scale far surpassing human ability. Tellingly, developers of one of the leading AI solutions for this — Google DeepMind — won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2024 for their unprecedented impact on biological research through AI.

Similarly, AI is helping with clinical trial design and analyzing vast biomedical datasets to uncover novel therapeutic targets. For patients, AI supports diagnostics through imaging analysis, predictive analytics and natural language processing. For example, AI-based retinal scans can detect not only eye disorders such as diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma but also aging disorders such as stroke and Parkinson's disease and heart failure using the same retinal images. AI is already being used in low- and middle-income countries for reading chest X-rays to flag suspected tuberculosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases within seconds.



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Harkabir Singh Jandu is an independent public health consultant.

There are also applications to diagnose malnutrition through image analyses and predict high risk pregnancies. People living in low-resource settings, where there are no specialists, can now get accurate diagnoses from specialists sitting far away who study their pathology slides or MRI scans. This has potential for improving health equity globally.

AI is also helping transform promotive and preventive public health functions. It is enhancing disease and risk factor surveillance, improving outbreak prediction, and facilitating decision-making. In South American and many other countries, AI has been routinely forecasting granular short-term trends of air pollution, informing people in advance to take mobility decisions to avoid pollutants, and municipalities to manage/improve air quality.

Additionally, AI is improving health communication by customizing messages and predicting behavioural responses. In low-resource settings, AI is contributing to efficient healthcare system management and providing supportive tools for frontline workers.

While solutions for use cases will proliferate and modulate, it is critical that the ethics of AI always takes primacy while designing frameworks and solutions for use. The WHO's recent guidelines on ethics and governance of AI for

healthcare are a step in the right direction. As we forge ahead, we must constantly identify and mitigate ethical issues that are relevant to global health, some of which are mentioned here.

We must invest in creating and curating diverse and representative datasets for eliminating the bias in algorithms and data, and making AI solutions more accurate.

Also, we need to augment humans-in-the-loop systems for guiding AI training and use in fields such as image-based diagnosis, patient counseling, clinical-decision systems and AI-robotic surgery. People should guide healthcare algorithm training, and rather than replacing clinicians, AI should augment them.

Besides, home and community-based AI tools must be designed for offline functionality and low-resource environments — this entails lightweight apps, local data storage, and user interfaces that do not assume literacy or tech fluency — and AI solutions should be built with and for communities. To realize that, it is necessary to involve local engineers, clinicians, and patients in the design and evaluation process.

AI exemplifies the role of the private sector as one of the driving forces in healthcare outcomes. Incubating and promoting private initiatives through policy will play a pivotal role in the

impact of AI. Parallely, we must create frameworks for determining responsibilities and liabilities unique to applications and contexts, and governments need to balance entrepreneurial goals and prowess with social goals and regulatory systems.

Currently, the AI regulatory frameworks of China, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States are recognized as stand-out, even if nascent, governance architectures. However, there is also a need to devote considerable thought to how we promote "public health AI exchange" and AI as a public good across borders, especially in the current state of geopolitics, because all the public health gains across the world are built on sharing of ideas and talents, collaborations and joint action.

While exploring the power of AI it behooves us to take the wide view of determinants of health rather than limit ourselves to healthcare delivery. AI can help solve problems in mental health, air and water pollution, food security, housing, climate risk adaptation, digital — increasingly recognized as a determinant — and other factors. And global public health must enhance multi-sectoral action through AI for improving lives.

For the first time in human history, we are at the cusp of an era in which a farmer in Tikrit (Iraq), a trader in Guangzhou (China) and a schoolteacher in Lima (Peru) can access the same AI-enabled diagnostics and curative healthcare services at similar cost. It is for society to use scientific temper, ethics and political will to use AI to ensure equity in global health outcomes.

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



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GLOBAL VIEWS

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What future awaits the expanded BRICS?

Worldwide interest in an alternative financial and economic framework is on the rise due to the US' tariff and sanctions policies

The US administration's economic decisions have wreaked havoc to the world markets. And President Donald Trump's approval rating for the first 100 days stood at 44 percent, which was lower than all his predecessors and even lower than his rating during the first 100 days of his first term.

The anticipated "golden age of America" has yet to materialize, and many US citizens doubt the effectiveness of the trade war supposedly initiated for the nation's future prosperity. Instead, they anxiously anticipate and fear inflation.

During this period, however, Trump has not overlooked BRICS. At a White House news conference and in his social media posts, he has repeatedly made a startling claim that the BRICS Plus nations would incur 100-percent tariffs if they created a single currency to challenge the dollar, even though no BRICS Plus nation has proposed such an idea.

Despite concerns surrounding its organization, the previous BRICS Summit held in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024, proved to be a notable success. Nearly all leaders from the original five BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — and the presidents of the four new member countries, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, attended. The only exception was Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who could not attend due to illness. Following the summit, Indonesia officially joined as the bloc's newest member in January 2025. Additionally, nine more nations, including Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, were recognized as "partner countries". Many analysts hailed the expansion of the coalition as a significant turning point, signaling the emergence of a post-Western world order where Global South nations collaborate to address their challenges together.



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Given the participant composition, a more powerful BRICS Plus has the potential to emerge as a central geopolitical and geoeconomic entity. The member states of BRICS Plus represent roughly 45 percent of the global population

and contribute over 35 percent of the world's GDP based on purchasing power parity. Collaboration within the bloc is swiftly becoming institutionalized, with multinational partnerships and working groups actively addressing shared

interests such as energy security, technology advancement, health, climate change and sustainable growth.

The New Development Bank, founded in 2015 with an initial subscribed capital of \$50 billion, and

the Contingent Reserve Arrangement — a 2014 agreement among BRICS Plus' central banks for mutual support during unexpected currency crises, which has funding of \$100 billion — are effectively structured and in operation.

Since its inception, BRICS Plus has transitioned from focusing primarily on economic and trade collaboration to addressing political and security matters. The organization operates within a well-defined framework based on three pillars: economics and finance, politics and security, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. These pillars align with the strategic priorities of the member nations, including economic development, security, narrative and normative influence and with Beijing's three global initiatives concerning security, development and civilization.

As BRICS Plus continues to follow its previously established decisions, the new strategies of the US administration and conflicts within the Western world will impact the bloc's actions.

With the tensions and disagreements within the G20, the United Nations, and even the G7, the rise of the grouping has triggered President Trump's aggressive approach toward BRICS Plus. The growing tensions between China and the US, along with President Trump's aggressive approach toward BRICS Plus, suggest the possibility of a confrontational dynamic.

The future of BRICS Plus is influenced by the actions of the US and Europe. These actions will determine whether the bloc will strive for geopolitical neutrality or seek to establish an alternative political and economic framework, potentially impervious to Western sanctions.

BRICS Plus has the potential to serve as a model and a substantial alternative to Western international

al cooperation, prioritizing equality and consensus-driven decision-making. However, the increasing number of member nations complicates the decision-making process. Under these circumstances, BRICS should make more effort in upholding unity through shared goals and constructive engagement given the varied interests of its members.

Several influential BRICS Plus nations are working to lessen the global financial system's and markets' reliance on Western institutions. The US administration's aggressive tariff and sanctions policies have intensified the necessity to enhance instruments such as the NDB and the BRICS Plus national currency pool, which are intended to be immune to sanctions.

Plans include implementing additional tools, such as an independent payment system, improved transport infrastructure and a broader e-commerce network, into the BRICS Plus trade ecosystem for national currency transactions. This approach aims to create a structure that can withstand sanctions and operate independently of Western pressure. The same impetus supports other initiatives to establish specialized BRICS Plus platforms for trading hydrocarbons, metals, agricultural products, fertilizers and other commodities.

The US administration's recent erratic decisions to impose, modify and remove import tariffs, coupled with its attempts to weaken the independence of the US Federal Reserve, have significantly increased worldwide interest in alternative financial instruments. The emerging BRICS Plus mechanisms are likely to address this rising demand.

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SONG GUOYOU

Against the odds

Despite the US taking various measures to disrupt its development, a new type of globalization is taking shape

The United States has been calculating the costs and benefits of globalization with the aim of protecting the US hegemony and its national interests. Donald Trump's reelection as US president signals the pursuit of "America First" policies and globalization will face even greater challenges.

During Trump's first term, globalization was already reshaped by the US exit from international systems and multilateral organizations. However, this did not stop or slow economic interactions and integration among other economies. Instead, a new form of exchanges has emerged from the process — a new type of globalization.

The US government's de-globalization strategy aims to secure a special and privileged position for the US in the global economic system, one in which the US intends to enjoy the same or even greater benefits while bearing less costs and responsibilities.

First, the US administration is using tariffs as a tool to exert pressure on other countries. By levying differentiated tariffs, the US attempts to manipulate trade, drive wedges among Global South countries which seek to advance the new type of globalization, and maintain trade relations with low-tariff Global South countries while imposing heavy costs on those countries subject to high tariffs. Furthermore, the US seeks to hinder the progress of the new type of globalization.

As the world's largest single-country market, the US remains an attractive trading partner for Global South countries. With varying tariff rates, Global South countries face divergent prospects in the US

market, which may potentially alter trade dynamics and create divisions in interests and positions among these nations.

Second, the US views technology and innovation as critical to its national competitiveness and economic growth. As a result, it continues to implement strict technological policies aimed at limiting the technological advancement of other countries.

If Global South nations are unable to harness technology to boost productivity and drive development, new globalization may lose momentum, and Global South countries may risk being marginalized in the international system.

Among Global South countries, China holds the greatest potential to break the US technology blockade, owing to its strong technological capabilities and significant progress across a range of tech fields. The US government therefore has made China its primary target. Taking into account the evolving landscape of technological development and the relative strengths of both nations, the US has tightened export controls, restricted technology investments in China, and curtailed normal technological exchanges — all in an attempt to impede China's technological progress.

The US believes that by restricting the development and application of emerging key technologies in China and other Global South countries, it can weaken the technological foundation of the new globalization and thereby suppress its overall momentum.

Third, the US seeks to weaponize the US dollar. The US-led globalization was built on a "dollar for manufactured goods" model, sustained by the dollar's global dominance. US administrations have always stressed and defended the dollar's supremacy — not just in terms of

its rising value, but more importantly, its central role in the global monetary system. As long as the dollar maintains this dominant position, the US can continue to influence the international economic order.

One of the US' major concerns is that the new type of globalization may lead to de-dollarization and weaken the dollar's dominant position, even if that is not an objective of the process. In reality, the greatest threat to the dollar's global position often stems from the US' erroneous policies, such as excessive borrowing or weaponizing the dollar for political purposes, but the US is very reluctant to acknowledge this. Instead, it assumes that as long as other countries continue to use the dollar, its dominant status in the international system will not be undermined.

As a result, the US has expressed deep concern over whether Global South countries will continue using the dollar amid the rise of new globalization. The US administration explicitly demanded that BRICS nations remain anchored to the dollar-based financial system and not create or support any alternative international currency, threatening to impose 100-percent tariffs on countries that choose otherwise. In essence, the US is using punitive measures to coerce other nations into continued reliance on the dollar.

While the US' "reciprocal tariffs" may have short-term impacts on Global South countries, such trade protectionist policies will exacerbate global economic fragmentation and eventually backfire and hurt the US' own interests.

Take the example of the US' technological curbs on China. While the tech blockade has posed challenges to China's tech progress, it has conversely strengthened China's resolve to pursue technological self-



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reliance, and promoted the development of a tech ecosystem that is increasingly independent of the US. As the US continues to implement tech curbs on China and escalates its strategy from a "small yard, high fence" to a "bigger yard, higher fence", it is a signal of the failure of its technology containment of China.

Similarly, the US policy of enforcing dollar dominance is inherently self-contradictory. The US seeks to reduce trade deficits while seeking to preserve the dollar's global supremacy, which are economically incompatible goals. As the US trade deficit is a precondition for the dollar to maintain its international status.

From a diplomatic perspective, the US' hard-line approach to forcing other countries to use the dollar is counterproductive. Many Global South countries are wary of the dol-

lar, viewing it as a symbol of US hegemony. The US practice of weaponizing the dollar for political purposes has fueled resentment across the world, and the US administration's threats may only accelerate these countries' de-dollarization efforts.

The current US administration's policies are a serious blow to free trade, which serves as the cornerstone of globalization. Going forward, the US-driven globalization and the new globalization jointly built by Global South countries are expected to coexist and compete, requiring all economies to adjust and adapt to the new dynamics.

Regardless of the model of globalization, critical issues, including inclusiveness, the provision of public goods and coordination among major powers must be addressed.

However, the current US policies do not move toward addressing

these issues. As the development trajectory of the new globalization does not align with US preferences, the US may take various measures to disrupt its development.

Nevertheless, the new type of globalization has emerged and shows strong vitality. In response to the "America First" model, Global South countries, which are the main promoters of the new type of globalization, must strengthen their internal momentum to increase the attractiveness and influence of it in the evolving global landscape.

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Agricultural base connects people to land

By YANG FEIYUE
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As summer arrives, the Wanmu modern agricultural base in Dabu village in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region welcomes a steady stream of visitors seeking a connection to the land.

Inside a sprawling greenhouse of Qicai Manor, part of the base in Yanshan district in Guilin, students watched workers methodically tend to newly planted tomato seedlings in early May. Their rhythmic movements painted a scene of spring cultivation.

At the heart of this operation, digital numbers dance across a soil sensor display, intriguing many students.

"This soil sensor acts as the greenhouse's nervous system," explains Li Yongfa, technical director of the agricultural base.

"We can monitor real-time temperature data transmitted to the screens by embedding it into the soil. When temperatures rise, we open the vents; when they drop, we seal them to maintain precise climate control," Li says.

The instant responsiveness of the sensor enables optimized growing conditions, targeted fertilization, and proactive measures against late spring chills or pest outbreaks, ensuring consistent vegetable production, he adds.

Students saw the tangible benefits in the mature, plump tomatoes and cucumbers.

The modern cultivation of tomatoes, for example, not only guarantees eco-friendly growing and superior quality but also doubles yields compared to conventional methods, Li says.

Wang Chunxia, director of Guilin Pomelo Peel Nature Education, led dozens of students to the facility in May.

"Walking them through agriculture's evolution, we help children engage all five senses among the orchards," Wang says.

"Their wide-eyed wonder at smart farming technologies spoke volumes, which helps sharpen their perception of the world in profound ways," Wang adds.

She notes that when children can trace a vegetable's "life story" through agricultural technology, the traditional image of backbreaking farm labor is reinvented. "The tour gives them a spiritual connection to the land in the digital age," she says.

Along with domestic visitors, foreign travelers have also made their way to the base.

Xiong Zuohua, general manager of Yuzi Paradise, a countryside resort in Dabu village, says international guests enjoy the distinctive features of China's smart agriculture at the base.

"This initiative allows our foreign friends to gain a deeper appreciation for our green, ecologically grown fruits and vegetables," Xiong says.

According to Jiang Yan, in charge of Qicai Manor's operations, Yanshan district has made significant strides in advancing large-scale, standardized modern agriculture through the Wanmu high-tech farming demonstration zone.

"The initiative enables us to develop premium, distinctive agricultural brands while enhancing market competitiveness," Jiang explains. "It directly increases farmers' incomes and contributes to rural vitalization efforts."

The project has achieved remarkable scale, cultivating over 10,000 mu (667 hectares) of land with trial plantings of diverse produce, including peppers and muskmelons.

Last year, the project contributed to a more than 3,000 yuan (\$416) increase in per capita income through land transfers among the villagers.

In addition to being an agritainment site, the demonstration base has evolved into an integrated agricultural innovation hub, combining seedling cultivation, new variety selection, technology experimentation, farmer training, and smart farming equipment applications, Jiang notes.

Yanshan has leveraged its abundant natural resources and picturesque rural landscapes in recent years to create uniquely favorable conditions for the integrated development of agriculture, culture and tourism, says Xue Yuan, deputy head of Yanshan.

"This has established a comprehensive development model with agriculture as its foundation, culture as its soul, and tourism as its vehicle," Xue adds.

In addition to the Wanmu demonstration base, the district has established several flagship projects that exemplify this model, including experiences highlighting rural leisure, pastoral ballads, tea and flowers.

Huang Qiuqin, the on-site director of the Wanmu agricultural base, says it has already begun serving as a model for agricultural modernization.

The project's initial success has led to tangible expansion.

"We plan to extend this agriculture model to four villages in Yanshan," Huang says, adding that the expansion aims to create widespread economic benefits, ultimately increasing incomes for local farmers throughout the region.



A student picks tomatoes at Qicai Manor, part of the Wanmu modern agriculture base in Dabu village, Yanshan district, Guilin of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The dance production *Lady White Snake*, which will make its US debut at the Summer for the City-Shanghai Day event at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York in July. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Reimagining a legend

Theater debuts new version of famed folk tale in US, **Zhang Kun** reports in Shanghai.

The Shanghai Grand Theatre's dance production *Lady White Snake* will make its US debut at the Summer for the City-Shanghai Day event at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

The dance theater's reinterpretation of the classic Chinese legend will present three shows at the iconic David H. Koch Theater on July 26 and 27.

Infused with the ingenuity of Eastern stage aesthetics, the performance will showcase the artistic vision and cultural vitality of China's contemporary performing arts to a global audience. Ticket sales are now open.

At the invitation of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Shanghai Day event will take place on July 26 and is cohosted by the Center for China Shanghai International Arts Festival and Lincoln Center.

With over 10 performances and activities, US audiences will get a glimpse into Chinese artists' original vitality and imagination. The event aims to promote international cooperation and people-to-people exchange through cultural interaction.

Lady White Snake is a groundbreaking reimagining of China's folk legend, *The Tale of the White Snake*. Moving beyond the traditional narrative, this production transforms a thousand-year-old story into a profound exploration of the human psyche, where dance becomes a language of deep psychological revelation.

Zhang Xiaoding, general manager of the Shanghai Grand Theatre, says that the company recreated the dance in 2021 as an innovation: "We want genres to converse and converge to retell the legend through the interplay of classical ballet and Chinese dance."

Tan Yuanyuan, a former principal ballerina of the San Francisco Ballet, director Zhou Ke, and Zhang merged their talents in a bold experimental



Celebrated ballerina Tan Yuanyuan will lead the dance production as artistic director to the US stage.

Playwright Zhou didn't like the traditional portrayal of the White Snake, who hides her true self for love and suffers from betrayal and persecution before being rescued by her grown son.

In a modern reinterpretation, Zhou reconstructed the story and created a dual space of reality versus the world of her mind. She also redefined the role of the Green Snake, the faithful maid to the White Snake in the traditional story. The Green Snake is performed as the White Snake's alter-ego in the new dance production.

In her interpretation, the Green Snake represents the animal part. "Like your inner self," Zhou says during a sharing session at Shanghai Library East earlier this year.

In the production, she presents *Lady White Snake* as an urban housewife troubled by mental illness who gains more humanity as the story passes through centuries and becomes morally disciplined. "I want her to answer to the call of her inner self, the Green Snake, and be brave and break boundaries," she says.

For the US debut, artistic director Tan will lead an international team of creators and performers. The music, stage design and costumes will be readjusted to the technical demands of the David H. Koch Theater.

A Chinese folk music concert featuring new compositions about the 12 Chinese zodiac signs will also be performed by the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra during the Shanghai Day event at Lincoln Center.

A musical carnival and "Shanghai City Fair" marketplace will merge Shanghai's intangible cultural heritage, games and animation art, cultural brands, and exclusive food and drinks to provide a full sensory dive into the charm of urban Chinese culture.

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tion to retell the Chinese legend of White Snake.

Since its premiere at the Shanghai Grand Theatre in 2022, the dance has been performed at home and abroad. Earlier this year, they presented an updated edition of the production.

Young choreographer Wang Peixian introduced modern dance elements

that transform the White Snake's inner world into a surreal, powerful tableaux in the new edition.

The story's earliest recorded version appeared during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Since then, the story has evolved to become a staple in Chinese folk opera, visual arts, and modern pop culture.

“

We want genres to converse and converge to retell the legend through the interplay of classical ballet and Chinese dance.”

Zhang Xiaoding, general manager of the Shanghai Grand Theatre



A group dance in the production which reconstructed the ancient tale.

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LIFE



Making a play on the past

Immersive musical helps revive historical opera theater's fortunes, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

The musical *Till We Meet Again* is enjoying a second run at the Beijing Huguang Guild Hall from April 30 to Sunday. DING CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Following its inscription as a national key cultural relics protection unit in 2019 and subsequent restoration, the Beijing Huguang Guild Hall reopened to the public at the beginning of last year.

Originally a private Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) residence, the complex was refurbished and expanded during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) as a gathering place for people from Huguang, which refers to today's Hunan and Hubei provinces, and a traditional Chinese opera house was added in the 19th century.

This operatic legacy continues today. The site now hosts the Beijing Museum of Traditional Opera, and since 2024, an immersive musical inspired by the venue's history.

After its first run from Dec 24 to Jan 25, the musical, *Till We Meet Again*, greeted audiences on April 30 with a second run. Four performances have been held each week during this run, which ends on Sunday.

The storyline is set around a century ago and follows the journey of a Peking Opera troupe that becomes involved in a murder mystery. Its head is arrested as a suspect, plunging the troupe into crisis. Jin Sheng, the troupe's lead actor, takes on the responsibility of proving their leader's innocence and reviving the troupe.

The audience is seated directly in front of the stage, just like the spectators in the story itself. They sit around square wooden tables with matching chairs. Each table has tea and refreshments, re-creating the classic setup of an old opera house.

The musical was initiated by the Beijing Federation of Literary and Art Circles and coproduced by multiple organizations, including the Jingju Theater Company of Beijing and the Beijing Quju Opera Troupe. Many



Left: The creative crew has designed a series of traditional culture-inspired promotional materials and creative products. YANG JIA / FOR CHINA DAILY



Middle: The immersive production takes place in a traditional opera house built in the 19th century. DING CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: Intangible cultural heritage experiential activities, including one themed on calligraphy, were available to theatergoers between April 30 and May 4. YANG JIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

of the actors have backgrounds in traditional Chinese opera.

Xu Jialin, one of the actors who plays protagonist Jin Sheng, is a 22-year-old student in the department of Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Beijing.

He says that due to his background as a traditional opera performer, he can relate to what it was like to be one in the past, adding that most of them were good-natured and dedicated to honing their skills.

"As our teachers always say, 'to learn an art, you must first learn to be a good person.' Only with integrity and sincerity, can we truly understand the character's thoughts and actions in the script," Xu says.

Hu You is an experienced Beijing Quju Opera performer. Taking part in the second run, he describes the process as a meaningful evolution for the cast. Each character is played by two or three actors, and during

this run, actors are rotated and regrouped, creating different casts, with fresh chemistry and synergy.

"We have to adjust our performances when we work with different actors. As performers, we might not feel a big difference, but the audience notices, and may prefer different sets of actors," Hu says.

"So in this second run, I think the audience will experience more refined details and a deeper emotional resonance compared to the first run."

Till We Meet Again is Hu's first time starring in a musical. Apart from an enriched learning process to help develop his role in areas such as dancing, swordplay and Kunqu Opera, the experience has left him impressed with musical fans.

"Many audience members have shared their thoughts and reviews on social media, and some are incredibly professional. We've drawn a lot from their feedback. So for us as actors, and for the produc-

tion as a whole, it's been a really valuable journey of growth," he says.

He was also moved to learn that some of his fans bought tickets to every one of his performances, which motivated him to hone his acting and give something new each time.

Set against the historical backdrop of the ancient complex, the production not only draws from its cultural background to create a compelling story, but also introduces interactive experiences and creative cultural merchandise.

According to Wang Yiwei, one of the producers, the musical will be performed at the venue every May and October, accompanied each time by activities to promote the venue's historical heritage and traditional cultural elements.

For the current run, the creative team has worked to enhance the sense of immersion by designing tickets and handouts inspired by items in the Beijing Museum

of Traditional Opera.

"Young musical fans can stroll through the ancient courtyard and buildings, and experience cultural heritage both from our production and the venue," Wang says.

"The moment they step through the gate, they will feel that they have arrived in an ancient theater of traditional opera and be drawn into the story."

The ticket design is inspired by a ticket for a performance by Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang, which is now preserved in the museum. The cast is printed in the style of traditional Chinese calligraphy, and the seat numbers are handwritten by staff.

An accompanying handout mimics the front page of a newspaper from a century ago, with an advertisement introducing highlights of the troupe, and a space where theatergoers can paste a photo of their own.

"Unlike a conventional plot synopsis,

our newspaper handout contains hidden clues. The design not only ties into the story, as we have a newspaper vendor character, but also brings the audience into the narrative," she says.

Before and after each performance, audience members can also check out stalls where they can collect stamps, take instant photos, and purchase merchandise.

The team designed a set of creative experiences inspired by the story. One of its most famous scenes has been turned into a special stamp set. By layering several stamps in different colors on the same sheet of paper, a complex and colorful image is gradually brought to life.

Special events are held during festivals and solar terms (a traditional Chinese system of seasonal markers to divide a year into 24 segments according to the motion of the sun), including intangible cultural heritage experiential activities from April 30 to May 4, during which theatergoers were able to try their hands at calligraphy, makeup, and the making of *ronghua* (velvet flowers).

"We aim to present more than just a production, but rather a multidimensional project that incorporates history, the museum, education, creative products and tourism," Wang adds.

"There are already people coming from other provinces, and in the future, we hope that the guild hall will become a destination for more travelers seeking in-depth cultural experiences, to see this site-specific production, and to learn about historical architecture, traditional opera and Beijing's cultural heritage."

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Maritime heritage traces China's three-century-long Hamburg story

BERLIN — For many children, museums are where dreams take root. For Peter Tamm Senior, however, a dream sparked by a simple childhood gift gave root to a museum — one that now tells a global story of connection, including that of the East meeting the West.

That gift, a grayish-white ship model the size of a finger, was given to him by his mother in 1934 to lift his spirits after he caught the flu. Today, that tiny vessel rests on a navy blue velvet cushion in a glass case in the International Maritime Museum Hamburg, a legacy born from Tamm's lifelong passion for maritime history.

Born in 1928 into one of Hamburg's oldest seafaring families, Peter Tamm Senior (1928-2016) amassed one of the world's largest private maritime collections. He later donated it to a charitable foundation, leading to the founding of the IMM in 2008.

The museum today is a landmark in Hamburg and a major attraction for maritime enthusiasts. With 10 floors — nine of which are exhibition "decks" — the IMM houses nearly 60,000 artifacts, plus expansive photo and book collections. But beyond its scale, what makes it special is the way it brings together seafaring stories from around the world, especially



Left: One of the collections at the International Maritime Museum Hamburg in Germany. Right: The exterior view of the museum. PHOTOS BY XINHUA



those linking the East and the West. One of the most striking symbols of East-West maritime connection is the bronze bust of Chinese explorer Zheng He (1371-1433), prominently displayed alongside six other legendary global navigators.

"Zheng He sailed all the way to East Africa with the largest fleet of its time. It's a fascinating story and the world should know about it," says Gerrit Menzel, a maritime histo-

rian and curator at IMM.

The museum received a detailed model of Zheng He's flagship from Fujian province and the overseas Chinese community in Hamburg just months after it opened. Tamm Senior once described it as a valuable addition that affirms China's vital role in the shared story of global maritime history.

The legacy of East-West maritime ties continues into the modern era.

Earlier this year, COSCO Shipping Lines Co donated a 2-meter-long model of a container ship based on a 400-meter-long blue vessel launched in 2018, one of the largest in the world.

"This great model of a 20,000 TEU (20-foot cargo-carrying capacity) container ship is actually our first 20,000 TEU container ship in the collection," says Menzel.

According to COSCO Shipping, the model represents the deep-rooted

partnership between China and the Port of Hamburg. COSCO ships have been anchoring there since the 1970s, a continuation of a relationship that dates back nearly 300 years.

In 1731, the first Chinese merchant ship arrived in Hamburg. By the 19th century, Chinese seafarers had begun settling in the city's St. Pauli district, forming one of the earliest Asian communities in Germany. Today, China remains Hamburg's

top trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching 2.2 million TEUs in 2024.

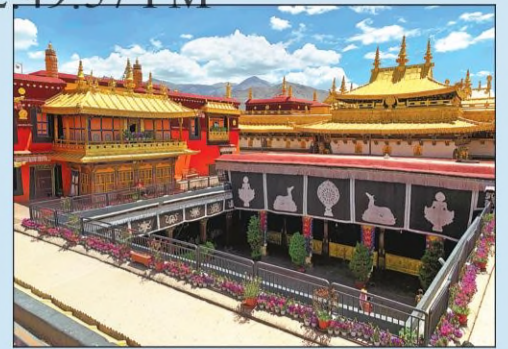
The museum not only illustrates East-West connections through maritime exhibits but also through ongoing research. In 2017, it launched the Qingdao Archive, a long-term project delving into the cultural and naval imprint Germany left in Qingdao, Shandong province, a major port city in eastern China once under German colonial rule.

Led by Menzel, the project collects personal items from German families whose ancestors lived in Qingdao from 1897 to 1914. "We want to prevent these things from being destroyed by young people who don't even know what they are," he says.

Menzel views the efforts as crucial to preserving shared memory — for education, research and future generations. He believes museums serve as vessels of memory, offering a space to reflect on the past to guide the future.

"That was always important to Mr Tamm," Menzel says, "to keep memories alive and learn from history, that bad things should not happen again, wrong things should not be repeated, and that the sea didn't divide us, but it brought us together."

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From left: Potala Palace captivates from every angle; Potala crowns Red Mountain in downtown Lhasa, capital of the Xizang autonomous region; Jokhang Temple melds Indian, Nepalese, Tibetan and Han architecture into a single and singular holy destination. PHOTOS BY ERIK NILSSON / CHINA DAILY

There's good reason Lhasa translates as "place of the gods". Enthroned at an elevation of over 3,600 meters on the crown of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the ancient city beckons pilgrims and seekers from every corner of our planet who come questing for the world beyond ours.

In the holy heart of the Xizang autonomous region, the sky stretches so wide and the sun blazes so bright that it feels as if the heavens have been slung just low enough for us mortals to reach.

To walk through Lhasa is to float above the clouds and breathe thin air thickened with heady incense and pungent yak butter. You hear the swish of monks' crimson robes, the murmurs of chanted sutras, and the rasping grind of prayer wheels.

Divinity isn't distant — it touches every roof and floor, every footstep and bowed head.

Potala Palace

The Potala Palace doesn't just dominate Lhasa's skyline — it defines it. Jutting 116 meters from the crest of the Red Mountains, its red-and-white tiers gleam like a mythical bastion come true.

For centuries, pilgrims have braved thousands of kilometers to reach this spiritual beacon. They drop to their knees every few steps and slide forward on wooden boards lashed to their elbows and knees that clack as they bow to the ground.

Inside, thousands of rooms accommodate over 100,000 artifacts. The air billows with smoke from joss sticks so condensed that's not just visible, but tangible. You not only see it but feel it tickle your eyes, as it carries the prayers of countless believers skyward.

Norbu Lingka

Norbu Lingka lives up to its Tibetan name of the "Treasure Garden".

This lush 374-room compound was built as the seventh Dalai Lama's summer palace in the mid-1700s and has since blossomed into Xizang's largest man-made garden. Over 100 plant varieties, including rare Himalayan species, flourish throughout the sacred sanctuary.

Dancers in yak costumes stage operas, and visitors are invited to join twirling circle dances.

Undeniably, Lhasa's ancient "treasure garden" still sparkles with life.

Home to the holy

Travelers discover Xizang's capital is divine in every sense, Erik Nilsson reports in Lhasa.

Jokhang Temple

An old Tibetan saying goes: "First, Jokhang was built. Then, Lhasa came to be." The pulsing "heart of Lhasa" still powers the city's spiritual circulatory system.

It exerts a gravitational pull that tugs pilgrims into its orbit, as they ceremoniously circumambulate its sacred nucleus. They circle around the compound along a 1,300-year-old, 1-kilometer walkway that teems with pilgrims whirling prayer wheels and bowing to the ground.

Legend has it that King Songtsen Gampo flung his ring, vowing to build a temple wherever it landed. It plopped into a lake, from which a white stupa rose like a lotus. The lake was filled in, and Jokhang was built on its bed.

Inside rests the venerated sleeping Buddha statue — portraying a 12-year-old Sakyamuni — that Tang Princess Wencheng brought to the city when she married Tubo King Songtsen Gampo. Jokhang still hosts the ceremony for drawing lots from a golden urn to confirm living Buddhas, immortalizing this tradition and the temple's eminence.

Nanshan Park

Nanshan's prominences become the city's easels at dawn and dusk, luring dozens of painters and photographers. The Potala Palace glows on the watercolor horizon and its dreamlike reflection shivers across the Lhasa River's ripples.

These once-barren, fallow slopes have taken on new life as a verdant woodland where cedar, pine and spruce jostle for sunshine, thanks to a 500 million yuan (\$69.4 million) reforestation project. Now, the leaves of over one million trees applaud the breezes as they flutter like the prayer flags that dangle above traditional tents and mani stones inscribed with scriptures.



Above: Pilgrims plod along Barkhor Street. Top: Visitors to Yamdrok Yutso Lake can hop atop yaks to take in the view.

Princess Wencheng

History dances to life every evening in a vast amphitheater, where 800 performers put on the musical drama, *Princess Wencheng*, that tells the story of her journey to Tubo to wed King Songtsen Gampo. The production is epic, not only in terms of story but also in scale. It fuses ancient folklore with cutting-edge stagecraft, and unfolds in front of massive replicas of Jokhang and Potala.

It unfolds in five acts that embed the plot within traditional culture: *Charm of Ancient Tang Dynasty*, *Buddhist Music of Heaven and Earth*, *Great Beauty of Tibetan Dance*, *God of the Plateau* and *Harmonious Beauty Between Tibetan and Han*.

This epic echoes through the ages, resonating until today.

Barkhor Street

Barkhor and its tangled side streets coil like a spiritual circuit around an eponymous square. For over 1,300 years, pilgrims have spun prayer wheels and ceremoniously marched around its circumference.

Its traditional architecture hosts a kaleidoscope of 20 ethnic groups, including Tibetan, Han, Mongolian and Hui. Its shops are packed with virtually every kind of folk art crafted in Xizang, including *thangka* paintings, yak-butter lamps and traditional incense handcrafted from dozens of ingredients that grow wild on the plateau.

Barkhor is a living labyrinth, where you can lose yourself in what makes Xizang Xizang.

Xizang Museum

The Xizang Museum displays a variety of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues wrought from virtually every medium. It exhibits ancient Tibetan books inscribed with gold, silver and coral. And it showcases technicolor *thangka* paintings, as well as a mosaic of other ethnic items.

The institution houses the permanent exhibitions, *Tibetan History and Culture* and *The People Closest to the Sun — Tibetan Folk Culture*, in addition to temporary displays. It enables visitors to explore the vastness of Xizang before venturing beyond the museum's walls.

Sera Monastery

The monks who clap fiercely in the courtyard of Sera Monastery aren't applauding. They're arguing.

The act of brashly slapping one's right hand on an extended left hand is part of a Buddhist debate format adopted in the 11th century. Monks thwack their palms to challenge an argument, emphasize a question

or declare the beginning of a proposition.

The dramatic gesture and loud sound are meant to snap participants out of any distraction, literally smacking their attention into focus. They are accompanied by other dramatic poses that represent different meanings.

Sera is hailed as one of Lhasa's three great Gelug university monasteries, and the dramatic debates are part of its scholarly legacy.

Its name translates as "wild roses", purportedly because these flowers bloomed on Mount Pubuchok when the monastery was built at its foot in 1419.

The 11-hectare compound also hosts the Main Assembly Hall, the Three Sand Mandala Chapels and the Hayagriva Chapel hidden in a secret cave that houses a horse-head deity.

But the main draw for outsiders remains the animated debates that are staged like melodramatic performances.

Yamdrok Yutso Lake

A couple of hours' drive from Lhasa, Lhokha prefecture's Yamdrok Yutso Lake is not only the sparkling jewel of the area's scenery but also its "jewelry". Locals refer to it as "the turquoise earrings scattered by a goddess". They also call it the "jasper lake above the prairies", "swan lake", and "the most beautiful lake in the world".

No terrestrial viewpoint permits you to see it in its entirety, a glittering expanse of nearly 340 square kilometers at over 4,400 meters.

Visitors to the body of water, which is one of Xizang's three holy lakes, can also discover nearby glaciers, hot springs, islands, temples, grasslands and mountains that stab over 7,000 meters skyward.

Yamdrok Yutso is geographically close but geologically distant from Lhasa.

Lhasa similarly stands between worlds — a human realm grounded in the corporeal and an Elysian domain, elevated by belief in the beyond.

It's a liminal destination where heaven and Earth convene, and the divine appears so close that you can reach out and touch it. Many try. Some do.

Contact the writer at erik_nilsson@chinadaily.com.cn



Online Scan to watch the video

Nanshan Park is a flashpoint for photographers and painters because it offers a panorama of Potala.



Yak burgers, sky-high burpees and loud cheese on the plateau



Erik Nilsson Reporter's log

Yak burgers. Sky-high burpees. Loud cheese.

I'd expected to roam the passageways of the Potala Palace, mingle with monks and yak it up, literally, during my most recent visit to the Xizang autonomous region.

But I've already learned to expect the unexpected, as previous visits have conferred such surprises as pineapples grown on the planet's "third pole".

This time, I didn't expect to get a ground yak patty with a side of fries at a five-star hotel, to perform burpees at an elevation of 4,600 meters, or to rediscover Tibetan yak cheese that's so tooth-cracking tough it crunches loudly when you chew it and sounds like a rock when you drop it.

I'd previously gobbled lots of yak and plenty of burgers but never a yak burger.

The verdict? Surprisingly generic. Honestly, I wouldn't have known it wasn't anything other than run-of-the-mill beef if not for the menu listing.

The burpees I executed in Nyingchi — known as "Xizang's little Switzerland" for its resemblance to the Alps — were a challenge from my martial arts coach. The stunt attracted quite a crowd, who rooted

for me, while some trip organizers hoped I'd stop after 10 reps out of fear of the thin air.

Several others in our group were greedily suckling oxygen canisters just to wall of breath while lying down on the bus.

Thing is, I've spent a lot of time at elevations of up to 6,000 meters without a trace of altitude sickness.

Tibetan friends joke I must have been a Tibetan in my previous life. I joke I must have been a yak — a quip that gets a giggle in

both Chinese and Tibetan.

I'd seen the yak cheese prepared in a shack behind the house of herders I'd stayed with in Qinghai province, where a growling generator-powered pump spat out butter into one bucket and dribbled curds into another.

And many nomads I've visited draped tarps clumped with chunks of cheese outside their tents to dry.

They appeared to me more like fossils harvested from underground than dairy processed on

the prairies.

I've had this one ring-shaped dollop for about a decade that seems the same as the day I brought it home. I took a nibble of it earlier this year, and not only did I not fall sick but I didn't notice any difference whatsoever compared to when it was fresh.

I wonder what unexpected discoveries I can expect during my next trip. Because no matter what we plan, Xizang, it seems, has its own itineraries in mind.

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Thriving commerce

Trade fair in Chengdu triggers business boom in nation's West
BUSINESS, PAGE 8



Green shift cuts waste in packaging
GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



Journey of discovery
Shared experiences bring Moroccans closer to China
CULTURE, PAGE 15

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GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2025

Legends of the court



Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray (from left to right) pose for a group photo on Sunday during a farewell ceremony for 14-time French Open champion Nadal at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris, France. Thousands of spectators cheered Nadal, who retired last November, with thunderous applause and chants as the "King of Clay" stepped onto the Court Philippe-Chatrier. The Big Four of the sport, with 69 Grand Slam titles between them, symbolize a golden era in men's tennis. LI JING / XINHUA See story, page 16

Hamas accepts truce plan proposed by US

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadailyapac.com

Hamas agreed to a proposal brokered by United States special envoy Steve Witkoff for a ceasefire in Gaza, a Palestinian official close to the group told Reuters on Monday, even as Israel rejected the terms of the plan as "impossible for any government to accept."

"The proposal entails the release of 10 living Israeli hostages held by Hamas in two groups in return for a 70-day ceasefire and a partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip," the Palestinian source said.

The proposal also stipulates the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said that Israel would only be willing to agree to a temporary ceasefire in return for the release of hostages, vowing that fighting can only end once Hamas is eradicated.

Meanwhile, a high-level meeting of European and Arab nations on Sunday in Madrid, Spain, called upon Israel to end the fighting in Gaza and ensure supply of more relief materials.

The meeting also revived calls — led by Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares — for a two-state solution to the conflict and pushed for sanctions against Tel Aviv, including the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and an arms embargo.

The talks came as the United Nations World Food Programme warned that people in Gaza were on the brink of starvation. Last week, the United Kingdom suspended trade talks with Israel while the European Union said it will review ties with the country.

The foreign ministers of Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Norway, Iceland, Slovenia and Turkey were among those who attended the meeting chaired by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah.

Albares warned that silence over Israel's ongoing killing of innocent Palestinian civilians "amounted to complicity."

Earlier, Albares said the meeting aimed to raise the momentum for the upcoming UN General Assembly meeting on Gaza — to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia.

At the meeting, members of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit on developments in Gaza reaffirmed the importance of implementing the two-state solution, Saudi Press Agency said.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes continued in Gaza. At least 36 people were killed and dozens injured early on Monday when Israeli forces bombed the Fahmi Al-Jarjawi School in Gaza City, the Wafa news agency reported.

Witnesses reported hearing screams and seeing charred bodies at the site of the strike.

In a joint statement, the Israel

Defense Forces and Shin Bet security agency said the strike on the former school targeted senior Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives who were running a command and control center embedded within the site.

The military claimed the facility was used to plan attacks against Israeli civilians and troops.

The IDF also claimed that steps had been taken to mitigate the risk of harming civilians.

In a separate incident, 19 Gazans, including children, were killed and others injured on Monday when the Israeli army bombed a house in the Jabalia al-Balad area, in the north of the Gaza Strip. Gaza medical sources said 50 people had been killed since dawn on Monday.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations appealed to United States President Donald Trump to act on Israel's latest atrocities, which killed two Red Cross workers in Gaza on Saturday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said in a post on X that it was "devastated by the death of two dear colleagues, Ibrahim Eid and Ahmad Abu Hilal."

Haydar Oruc, a former researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey, told China Daily that Israel has become increasingly isolated and cornered in the eyes of the international community.

This is not only because of its aid blockade, but also because of Operation Gideon's Chariots, which envisages taking over the whole of Gaza, and the IDF's recent firing of warning shots at foreign diplomats visiting Jenin in the West Bank.

"It should be kept in mind that neither the Madrid meeting nor the conference in New York will be enough to stop Israel without US support," Oruc said.

Oruc noted that the Madrid meeting showed that the international community "has recognized the realities in Gaza" and has "started to turn its back on Israel."

However, he said it should not be forgotten that the "US attitude" is "the decisive factor in this matter" and Washington needs to contribute to this process.

Jawaid Iqbal, chairman of the Department of West Asian and North African Studies at Aligarh Muslim University in India, said the Madrid summit, where Spain's foreign minister openly called for imposing sanctions on Israel, marked a shift in European views.

"The transformation has been gradual but palpable. What began as rhetorical hedging has evolved into more pointed criticisms and, increasingly, calls for concrete action," Iqbal told China Daily.

"The prospect of Israel becoming a moral and legal liability has shaken the EU's prior alignment," he added.

Agencies contributed to this story.

EU readying response to tariffs

With mutual trust undermined, uncertainty clouds ties despite claims of easing tensions

By JULIAN SHEA in London and ZHONG NAN in Beijing

The mutual trust between the European Union and the United States has been "severely undermined" by the recent tariff dispute, experts said, adding that relations remained fraught, despite claims of a soothing of tensions over the weekend.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump threatened to impose a 50 percent tariff on EU imports starting June 1, saying negotiations with the trading bloc of 27 nations "are going nowhere".

Over the weekend, he spoke with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, a discussion she described as a "good call", which resulted in any possible tar-

iffs being delayed until July.

"The EU and the US share the world's most consequential and close trade relationship," Von der Leyen wrote on X. "Europe is ready to advance talks swiftly and decisively."

Despite the diplomatic niceties, Zhang Haiyan, a professor specializing in international trade at Hangzhou-based Zhejiang Financial College, warned that the European perception that it had been "betrayed by its ally" meant it was ready to hit back if necessary.

"The EU's preparations and countermeasures for the latest US tariff policy move will be more thorough and comprehensive than in previous trade conflicts, enabling it to retaliate if negotiations fail in the following days," she told China Daily.

The EU has previously threatened to hit back at the US with tariffs of its own, including a list of US exports viewed as possible targets, such as cars and aircraft.

It has also long been wary of the activities and market dominance of major US-based tech firms, which could potentially be an area for it to target if trade tensions are ramped up further.

"The EU is acutely aware that the tariff war initiated by the US is unlikely to subside easily and that negotiations with the US will not necessarily proceed smoothly," Zhang said, adding that beyond the digital sector, financial services provided by US banks within the EU are also seen as likely candidates for countermeasures.

The institutions and agreements that led to the formation of the modern EU came about in the aftermath of World War II, as a way to tie neigh-

boring countries together and stop them from ever going to war against one another again, after the continent was ripped apart by two devastating conflicts in less than 40 years.

But at his first cabinet meeting in February this year, Trump said, "Let's be honest, the EU was formed in order to screw the US... that's the purpose of it, and they've done a good job of it," an allegation he went on to make numerous times.

Lars Klingbeil, finance minister in Germany's newly-formed government, said that "serious negotiations" with Washington are needed, rather than "further provocations". Klingbeil has spoken to his US counterpart Scott Bessent about the issue, because "the US tariffs endanger the US economy just as much as the German and European economies".

See Levies, page 3

ANCIENT ROADS PAVED BASE OF NATIONAL UNITY

Research reveals Shudao network's role in connecting people from different areas, cultures

By WANG KAIHAO in Chengdu and XU LIN in Guangyuan, Sichuan



Winding through mist-covered mountains and flourishing forests, ancient stone steps cling defiantly to cliffs.

Weathered planks and chiseled paths are witness to old tales of merchants, warriors, travelers and rulers of dynasties whose ambitions

forged this ancient construction marvel.

This is Shudao, or "Roads to Shu". Shu is a historical term roughly referring to present-day Sichuan province. The ancient road network spreads from the heart of the Sich-

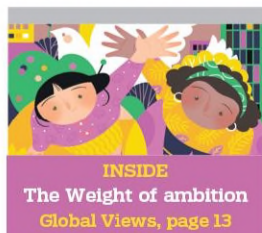
uan Basin all the way to the Central China Plains. It is more than 2,000 years old, and played a pivotal role in providing transportation arteries throughout ancient China.

The Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai, who grew up in Sichuan, wrote in a famous stanza: "The road to Shu is harder than climbing to the blue heavens."

In July 2023, President Xi Jinping visited Cuiyun Corridor, a section of

Shudao in Jiange county, Guangyuan. The corridor is also home to a well-preserved ancient artificial cypress forest in which the oldest tree dates back over 2,300 years. Xi praised the protection efforts that had been made, and urged local authorities to preserve the ancient trees and pass on China's fine traditional culture.

See Shudao, page 2



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Ukraine crisis a critical lesson for the West

With the Russia-Ukraine conflict entering its fourth year, the realities of the battlefield have shattered many of the comfortable illusions nurtured by the West. The conflict, far from being the "defense of democracy," it was initially portrayed to be, has become a profound test of strategic endurance, national interests and the limits of the liberal order's coercive tools.

The conflict offers at least three fundamental lessons, which reaffirm a truth long understood by students of geopolitics: in interna-

WORLD WATCH
By Marcus Vinicius De Freitas

tional relations, power, not narrative, defines outcomes. First, narratives do not win wars. Western leaders sought to present the conflict as a moral crusade, a clash between good and evil, liberty and tyranny. But history offers few rewards to those who mistake rhetoric for reality. As Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu said more than

two thousand years ago, "All warfare is based on deception."

In this case, however, the deception was largely self-directed: slogans, speeches and hashtags cannot substitute for artillery, logistics and industrial capacity. Ukraine's performance on the battlefield, particularly during its 2023 counteroffensive, was not dictated by values or declarations, but by military asymmetry — and an opponent prepared for a "war of attrition".

See Conflict, page 3



A Palestinian child inspects the damage at a school sheltering displaced people following an Israeli strike on Monday in Gaza City. Strikes on Monday killed at least 52 people in the Gaza Strip. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS / REUTERS

PAGE TWO

Shudao: On the roads to hidden glories

From page 1

The difficulty of trekking these passageways may have waned thanks to modern transportation, but a new generation of custodians and researchers has set off to revitalize interest in the ancient roads.

Path to understanding

At a temple in Jiange county, Fu Yubin and his team carefully measure an 800-year-old stone tablet while studying the blurred inscriptions.

It records how a magistrate during the Southern Song period (1127-1279) organized locals to maintain the roads and plant trees along them, an indication that environmental awareness existed centuries ago.

The team, from the county's cultural relics protection and management office, is part of the ongoing fourth national census on cultural relics being conducted across China. Trekking remote mountains and forests, its six members have verified and registered 30 new cultural relics from 120 reported across the county. Over 30 potential new discoveries are also waiting for final evaluation.

The team has also erected protection signs for newly discovered cultural heritage items and assigned custodians to ensure their safety.

"The locals are very welcoming," Fu said. "A villager once guided us deep into the wilderness. We traversed the remote terrain for more than an hour, using a machete to clear dense vegetation before locating a hidden inscribed stone tablet."

As a participant in the third national census on cultural relics in China from 2007 to 2011, Fu has seen great changes in the field.

"Gone are the days of relying solely on measuring tapes. Now, digital devices record relic dimensions with greater accuracy. We also have advanced tools like drones to capture detailed site photos from above," he said.

The current mechanism establishes a scientific framework and clearly delineates responsibilities among departments.

Fu said the fourth census will improve understanding of the cultural heritage associated with ancient roads. "We've carefully studied the stories behind each tablet inscription, stone monument and ancient building, thereby enriching understanding of our cultural heritage resources," he said.

He has also noticed the government now pays much more attention to cultural heritage conservation, stressing the importance of uncovering the historical value of relics and bringing them to life. As a result, public awareness of relics preservation has greatly improved.

"The spirit of the ancient roads,

forged through millennia, embodies the unyielding resilience of our ancestors who carved pathways through mountains while working in harmony with the rugged landscape," said Cai Dongzhou, a professor at the School of History and Culture, China West Normal University, in Nanchong, Sichuan.

"This legacy of perseverance and adaptive ingenuity continues to inspire generations," he said.

"Its ecological value also benefits us greatly," Cai added. "In Cuiyun Corridor, for example, both (various) governments and the general public have actively planted and protected the ancient cypress trees for generations. It's also a typical example of eco-friendly civilization."

Archaeological horizons

In March 2024, a large-scale archaeological project focusing on Shudao was launched following the fourth national census. The project not only covers Sichuan, but also extends to nearby Chongqing municipality as well as Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

Archaeological research institutes from the four provincial-level regions joined hands to establish a uniformed format for research for the project.

For example, the archaeologists focus on a 50-meter zone on both sides of a route to collect information and relics, and criteria have been standardized to classify the findings.

"This could set a national example for research of ancient road ruins and the lineage of cultural heritage sites," said Zheng Wanquan, an associate researcher at the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology who co-hosted the project.

By April this year, sections of Shudao totaling 2,073 km, and 1,034 heritage sites along its routes — including plank road ruins, bridges, and temples — had been investigated. Among them, 297 sites were newly found.

Many names of the sections are connected to famous stories in Chinese history.

On Chencang route, Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) confused his adversary and mobilized a mighty army.

Qishan route was where the renowned 3rd-century strategist Zhuge Liang regretted his failed expeditions and unfulfilled ambitions to unite the nation.

On Lizhi route, galloping horses carried gifts of lychees from Tang Dynasty emperor Li Longji to a beloved concubine, giving the road its name, as *lizhi* means lychee.

Also, inscriptions on tablets tell how local governments and residents built and managed the roads

al heritage workshops to boost income for locals through tourism, according to Xinhua News Agency.

"Besides national and provincial-level immovable cultural relics along the Jinniu Road, we should also strengthen protection for lower level cultural heritage, including stone bridges," said Huang Jian, an associate research fellow at the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology who is in charge of designing the Jinniu trails.

The authorities plan to develop a mobile app or mini-program that allows tourists to access information about cultural heritage, dining options and accommodation along the travel trails. The app will also provide customized itineraries based on user demand.

Shudao was originally dotted with posts offering lodging, meals and fresh horses for officials transporting imperial documents and military dispatches.

"We plan to build several service centers at carefully selected locations near the historical post hous-



A group of archaeologists from Sichuan and Gansu provincial institutes of cultural relics and archaeology jointly investigate a section of Qishan route of Shudao in Tanchang county, Gansu province. ZHENG GUOMU / FOR CHINA DAILY



A view of a section of the Lizhi route on a cliff in Chongqing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: A section of Cuiyun Corridor in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, shaded by cypress trees. XU LIN / CHINA DAILY



Right: A Buddhist grotto at Huangze Temple in Guangyuan, Sichuan. Many such sites are testimony to the spread of Buddhism via Shudao roads. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and the roles played by many unsung heroes.

"We compare plank roads and bridges in various forms on different sections," Zheng said. "They fully demonstrate the complexity of Shudao and how the builders throughout history showed their creativity and craftsmanship in construction."

Studies of the heritage sites and written records, including chronicles, literature, and other documentation, may help portray everyday life along the rugged routes.

Rich documentation on Shudao and its ruins exists for the periods

after the Qin (221 to 206 BC) and Han dynasties, Zheng said. Back then, rulers of powerful, united central dynasties in China had begun to build roads connecting Sichuan with the rest of the country.

"We can use the heritage of the roads to link the scattered dots," he said. "However, before that period, clear historical recordings are insufficient. We mainly refer to excavations and look for clues from under the ground. The dotted discoveries will join into lines and thus point where the roads went."

Shudao roads might have originally been regional roads, that later became

part of a national road network.

Li Yanfeng, an associate researcher at the Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology, led a team to unearth a surprise discovery at the Liangluping site near the Chencang route in Baoji, Shaanxi.

Excavated tombs and pottery at the site indicate they are over 3,000 years, and existed before the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century to 771 BC) was established to rule a vast territory centered on Shaanxi.

"Thanks to roads over the mountains, Zhou people were found to have settled in the river valley (to the south)," Li said. "We also discovered

relics from various historical periods on the site, which proved the crucial role the road played in south-north communication."

Exchange routes

On the northern edge of the Sichuan Basin, the Qinling Mountains shield fertile land from cold southerly winds and are also a physical boundary between northern and southern China.

However, due to the ancient roads, people on both sides of the mountains were not separated.

Sun Hua, an archaeology professor at Peking University, said recent research showed many city ruins were found along Shudao's routes in different provinces, indicating its function as a network of national roads.

"Temples show how Buddhist art spread into Sichuan and boomed there. Porcelain produced in Sichuan has been found along the routes," Sun said. "Shudao was not only a complex of passageways with political and military significance, it created hubs for wide cultural and economic links."

Cai, the history professor, said the ancient roads enabled economic trade, administrative governance and national unity.

"China has had many mass migrations in its history, and the roads promoted ethnic integration and boosted cultural exchanges between the southern and northern regions," Cai said.

Veteran archaeologist Wang Zijin, a professor emeritus at Renmin University of China, said Shudao has global significance.

"Key ancient civilizations around the world often formed and prospered along big rivers," Wang said. "In China, it also happened along the Yellow and Yangtze rivers. But ancient Chinese people overcame the geographic barriers between the basins of the two big rivers to form a unity. That's something extraordinary."

"Road networks extending from Shudao, the Silk Road as well as the Maritime Silk Road were also connected. That left an outstanding mark on the world's history," he said.

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Walking ancient paths a step closer for modern-day visitors

By XU LIN in Guangyuan, Sichuan
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Walking in the footsteps of ancient travelers along Shudao is breathtaking, with rock carvings and cliff inscriptions that seem to whisper stories from China's past.

Now, these cultural treasures along the ancient roads connecting present-day Sichuan province and Central China will be more accessible to explorers.

The development plan of four well-designed cultural heritage themed travel trails of Shudao's 160-kilometer-long Jinniu (Golden Ox) Road section, was recently announced, aiming to cultivate the route's cultural and historical value as a strategic road system.

The trails, which span Guangyuan and Mianyang in Sichuan province, were among the top 10 outstanding cultural heritage-themed tourism routes in 2024.

The construction period will take place from 2025 to 2027. Local authorities also plan to organize study tours and intangible cultur-

al heritage workshops to boost income for locals through tourism, according to Xinhua News Agency.

"Besides national and provincial-level immovable cultural relics along the Jinniu Road, we should also strengthen protection for lower level cultural heritage, including stone bridges," said Huang Jian, an associate research fellow at the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology who is in charge of designing the Jinniu trails.

The authorities plan to develop a mobile app or mini-program that allows tourists to access information about cultural heritage, dining options and accommodation along the travel trails. The app will also provide customized itineraries based on user demand.

Shudao was originally dotted with posts offering lodging, meals and fresh horses for officials transporting imperial documents and military dispatches.

"We plan to build several service centers at carefully selected locations near the historical post hous-



Tourists join a cultural hiking activity in Cuiyun Corridor last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

es, allowing tourists to dine, rest, stay, and even rent bicycles there," Huang said.

Authorities should encourage locals to convert vacant properties into homestays or eateries, to boost incomes and address the needs of tourist, he said.

Travelers mainly visit the isolated scenic spots along Shudao for sightseeing. Now, we are transforming this ancient network into living cultural roads by linking its fragmented heritage into a continuous journey," he said.

To elevate the visitor experience,

physical and digital interpretations are essential to showcase Jinniu Road's cultural heritage. These include digital exhibits of exquisite Buddhist statues and murals, Huang said.

Shudao spans Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, and Chongqing municipality, which presents another challenge to protection efforts.

Huang said it's important that locals volunteer to protect Shudao to keep watch over nearby areas and report problems to the authorities.

Zheng Wanquan, an associate researcher at the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, said Shudao can blend its historical legacy with ease of access.

"People can walk these ancient paths and literally step through history," Zheng said.

Authorities will carefully select sections of Shudao to open to visitors. Zou Yiqing, head of the department of heritage sustainable development at the Beijing Tsinghua Tongheng Urban Planning and

Design Institute, said Shudao was once a vital artery connecting important cities.

"But now we have (transportation) options like cars, trains and planes. This shift makes it challenging to cultivate emotional connections with Shudao," she said.

To unlock its full cultural value, Zou believes deeper exploration and more promotion are needed. The ancient network offers rich cultural themes and experiences. For example, its marvelous views once inspired masterpieces by iconic Tang Dynasty (618-907) poets.

During the early 20th century, overseas explorers and travelers wrote about their Shudao expeditions along and captured valuable historical photos.

"It provides a glimpse into the past," Cai Dongzhou, a history professor from China West Normal University, said. "And there have been more overseas hikers on the routes in recent years."

Wang Kaihao contributed to this story.

TOP NEWS

Conflict: Nation calls for peace through diplomacy

From page 1

The mismatch between expectations and results has been profound.

Second, sanctions, long touted as the West's most potent instrument of pressure, have failed to yield the desired results. Rather than isolating and destroying the Russian economy, the sanctions have accelerated structural change. Moscow has responded by reorienting trade eastward, strengthening financial ties with the Global South, promoting de-dollarization and leveraging energy markets to stabilize its revenues.

If anything, the sanctions have shown how dependent the current global system remains on Western architecture, and how motivated many actors now are to build alternatives. The attempt to punish Russia has resulted in growing resilience elsewhere. And the spillover effects — food insecurity, inflation, energy shocks — have had broader consequences across emerging markets, fueling resentment toward the West's choices.

Third, the conflict has exposed the fragility of collective security promises. Although often described as a bulwark of stability, NATO has been cautious and reactive.

NATO's unwillingness to get involved beyond supplying armaments to Ukraine reveals what many suspected: The military alliance's Article 5 is only as good as the risks any member state is willing to take. The specter of a nuclear catastrophe continues to govern restraint, and rightly so.

But this also means that smaller NATO members and allies, reliant on extended deterrence, must ask themselves what guarantees exist in a crisis threatening great-power interests. In the end, a nation's survival trumps alliance politics. NATO today resembles a less unified strategic front and a collection of interests loosely bound by bureaucratic consensus.

Amid this scenario, much has been said about Russian President Vladimir Putin, often reduced to a caricature in the Western media. But a more sober analysis reveals a leader who has been seriously studying the West's internal weaknesses: polarization, electoral volatility, short-term political horizons and declining appetite for military entanglements. Putin's actions may be controversial, but they are far from irrational; they reflect an understanding of timing, fatigue and the West's diminishing capacity to sustain long wars without popular support. His strategic acumen is evident in his calculated endurance, and his gamble increasingly appears to be working.

In recent months, the re-emer-

gence of United States President Donald Trump on the global stage, and his offer to "mediate peace" between Moscow and Kyiv have drawn global attention. Far from a peace initiative, his interest in "brokering a deal" seems to be an attempt to save NATO's face. The transatlantic military alliance has reached a point of strategic embarrassment: It cannot decisively intervene or claim success. Trump's mediation proposal, projected as pragmatism, is an exit strategy masked as diplomacy — designed to pacify domestic skepticism, cut political costs and prevent NATO from further reputational erosion. Ironically, it may add credence to Trump's critique of NATO as being expensive and obsolete.

Yet the conflict's most profound geopolitical revelation is the increasing detachment of the Global South from the Western narrative. Countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America have adopted a position of strategic equidistance. Their refusal to align with either side is not just a matter of moral indifference, but a significant expression of disillusionment.

Many see the West's invocation of international law as selective, its appeals to global solidarity as self-serving, and its sanctions regime as disruptive to global development. These countries seek not confrontation, but cooperation — not bloc politics, but balanced relations. BRICS' expansion and rising regional forums are not symbolic but reflective of a desire for a more pluralistic agency.

China's call for dialogue, political settlement and multipolarity resonates with the Global South in this context. Unlike the zero-sum logic of Cold War thinking, China's call is to restore peace through diplomacy. For many emerging economies, this approach is not just appealing, but a reflection of their own priorities: development, sovereignty and a seat at the table where decisions are made, not just where consequences are absorbed.

The Ukraine crisis has become far more than a European conflict. It is a mirror held up to the international system, exposing its contradictions, revealing its limitations, and pointing toward a future where multipolarity is not merely emerging, but already shaping outcomes. Those who cling to narratives will find themselves sidelined. Those who adapt to new realities — through strategic autonomy and diplomatic pragmatism — will shape the world's contours.

The author is a professor at China Foreign Affairs University and a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Spirit of friendship



Members of a female flag football team from the United States play a friendly match with students of Beijing National Day School on Monday in Beijing. The team will stay in China for a week as part of a cultural exchange between China and the US. The team will also visit Chengdu in Sichuan province and Shanghai. LI HE / XINHUA



Chinese Premier Li Qiang shakes hands with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Monday during the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The host country currently holds the rotating chair of ASEAN. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Trilateral meeting seen as key for Global South

Cross-regional talks expected to enhance cooperation for development and prosperity

By MO JINGXI
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Premier Li Qiang arrived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Monday, as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council and China will hold an inaugural summit for trilateral cooperation that observers said will give new momentum to Global South cooperation.

The three parties now have more incentive than ever to coordinate in the current geopolitical climate in the face of the United States' practice of protectionism, experts said.

In his Monday meeting with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaleed Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, crown prince of Kuwait, Li said that China looks forward to strengthening communication and cooperation with GCC countries and ASEAN member states, in order to promote peace, prosperity and stability in Asia and make positive contributions to upholding the interests of the Global South.

Li said the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit is an opportunity to that end. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular news briefing last week that China supports Malaysia, ASEAN's rotating chair this year, in proposing and hosting the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit.

"Given the current international and regional landscape, it is highly significant that the three sides are gathering together to discuss ways to enhance solidarity and cooperation for development and prosperity, and promote cross-regional cooperation of mutual benefit," Mao said.

Xu Liping, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Center for Southeast Asian Studies, said the summit is expected to provide more stability and certainty for the global economy at a time when the International Monetary Fund has significantly downgraded its global growth forecast in 2025 to 2.8 percent citing a "major negative shock" from the new tariffs imposed by the US.

"Such cross-regional cooperation

“Such cross-regional cooperation fully demonstrates the unstoppable trend of upholding multilateralism and reflects the intrinsic drive for trade and investment liberalization and facilitation.”

Xu Liping, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Center for Southeast Asian Studies

fully demonstrates the unstoppable trend of upholding multilateralism and reflects the intrinsic drive for trade and investment liberalization and facilitation," Xu said.

While China is the world's second-largest economy, ASEAN, a group of 10 Southeast Asian countries — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — is the fifth-largest one after the US, China, the EU and Japan.

Meanwhile, the GCC economies, comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are expected to double their economic growth rate from 2.1 percent in 2024 to 4.2 percent in 2025, according to a report released in February by the First Abu Dhabi Bank, the largest bank in the UAE.

Julia Roknifard, a senior lecturer at the School of Law and Governance at Taylor's University in Malaysia, said the convergence of major energy exporters in the GCC, ASEAN's large consumer base and China's massive market of over 1.4 billion people offers significant benefits for all parties.

"Together, they hold enough

resources within their borders to sustain trade to weather potential restrictions or disruptions," she wrote in a recent column.

According to Xu, from CASS, although China-ASEAN and China-GCC cooperation are quite close respectively, and ASEAN and the GCC held their first summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2023, a trilateral cooperation mechanism is still absent.

"The upcoming summit will be a significant addition to the existing cooperation mechanisms. By effectively eliminating information gaps and reducing communication costs in policymaking, the three parties will be able to achieve 'resonance' in industrial and economic policies and voice a collective call on international issues of common concern," he said.

The trilateral meeting will also become another milestone event in Global South cooperation, as the summit is expected to attract the participation of more countries and international organizations in the future, Xu added.

Prior to the Chinese premier's arrival in Malaysia, he made an official visit to Indonesia, where he held talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto and met with Puan Maharani, speaker of Indonesia's House of Representatives.

When addressing a symposium for Chinese enterprises in Jakarta on Sunday, Li said that China has made full preparations for external shocks and the country has the confidence and the capability to sustain the positive momentum of economic performance.

Noting that it is not easy for Chinese enterprises to operate overseas, Li said that China will continue to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with more countries, create a favorable environment for the overseas development of Chinese enterprises, and provide more opportunities and support, including stronger policy backing.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Levies: Turbulence may reposition WTO

From page 1

Oliver Oehms, executive director and board member of the German Chamber of Commerce in North China, said that the ongoing lack of certainty about what would happen next would inevitably cause anxiety, which could have global consequences.

"An undeniable reality is that the current situation still makes German companies feel uneasy, this uncertainty may gradually trickle down to investment decisions, leading firms to adopt a more cautious approach in their plans for both the US and Asian markets," he said.

However, he added, this turbulence could possibly reposition the World Trade Organization on the global stage.

"At the global level, the governments of Germany and China both recognize the value and role of the WTO," he said. "Any effort to strengthen or re-establish the importance and influence of the WTO, whether it comes from China or Europe, should be welcomed."

Since their initial announcement on April 2, many of the tariffs that Trump's administration unveiled have been altered, delayed or suspended, causing financial confusion across the world.

Zak Stambor, an analyst at eMarketer, a New York-based market research company, said that "ever-shifting trade policies" meant "navigating an increasingly unpredictable landscape", making life and any attempts at financial planning harder for manufacturers and consumers.

"The policies in place today may well shift tomorrow, making medium-term planning challenging and long-term planning nearly impossible," Stambor said. "It is no wonder so many companies are pulling their guidance altogether," he added.

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Tapping of tech urged to build cultural strength

By CAO DESHENG
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Officials and experts called on Monday for greater efforts to promote integration of science and technology with culture to boost the high-quality development of the cultural sector and build China into a leading country with a thriving socialist culture.

They made the remarks at the Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength, which was held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

The event, themed "Deepening Reform in the Cultural Sector to Ignite Cultural Creativity", was hosted by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, delivered a keynote speech at the forum.

Huang Kunming, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Party secretary of Guangdong, also gave a speech.

The participants at the forum underlined the need to meet the opportunities and challenges brought by the new technological revolution, grasp the trends of digitalization and intelligence, and explore effective mechanisms for integrating culture and technology, in order to inject fresh vitality into the creation, production and publicity of cultural works.

It is crucial to actively leverage cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to promote their broad application in the cultural sector in order to foster a greater number of innovative formats, models and scenarios, they said.

Shen Zhuanghai, executive deputy secretary of the CPC Wuhan University Committee, said that embracing the changes arising from digital and intelligent development has become an inevitability in promoting cultural prosperity.

It is necessary to keep abreast of the latest advancements in digital technology to promote the deep integration of such technology with cultural development, facilitate innovation in cultural works, and further energize the vitality of cultural forces in advancing Chinese modernization, Shen said.

The third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, an important Party meeting held in July last year, emphasized the need to adapt to the rapid development of information technology to stimulate creativity and innovation in the cultural sector.

Gao Wen, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a professor of computer science at Peking University, said that the deep integration of culture and AI and their mutual empowerment have become global trends sweeping the world.

"This is not only a key strategic issue for inheriting Chinese cultural heritage and enhancing the country's core competitiveness, but also a significant pathway that we must firmly stick to as we embark on the journey of becoming a strong country in culture," said Gao, who is at the forefront of China's rapid development in AI.

While highlighting the inevitable trend of applying AI technologies in the cultural sector, he warned of the potential problems and risks that may arise, such as copyright concerns related to AI-generated content, data privacy and personal information security.

CHINA

Fossil exhibition by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026



Visitors peruse a collection of dinosaur fossils at an exhibition titled *China's Dinosaur World* at the Shanghai Natural History Museum on Monday. The exhibition, featuring 118 representative specimens and models from 12 research institutes and science museums across country, aims to showcase the evolution of dinosaurs and the scientific discoveries of three generations of Chinese paleontologists.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Artificial intelligence usage on student theses debated

Effectiveness of measures on curbing excessive reliance remains a challenge

By ZOU SHUO

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As graduation season approaches, debate is intensifying over how universities should regulate the use of artificial intelligence in student theses.

With the rise of generative AI tools, many Chinese universities have rolled out new restrictions this year aimed at curbing excessive reliance on AI-generated content, citing concerns over academic integrity. But the effectiveness and fairness of these measures remain highly contested.

Several institutions have introduced "AI writing bans," setting limits on the acceptable proportion of AI-generated material in theses. The goal, officials say, is to strike a balance between leveraging technology and preserving human creativity. However, students report a host of challenges, including inaccurate detection and awkward writing alterations, in their efforts to meet AI thresholds.

Some students say their self-written theses were flagged by detection tools as being up to 60 percent AI-generated, prompting them to rewrite logically sound sentences into clunky alternatives. Others are



These platforms use AI to detect AI, so sometimes they judge human writing as machine-generated and vice versa."

Xu Ziya, senior student at Huazhong University of Science and Technology

turning to online tutorials and AI tools to help reduce their AI detection scores — essentially using AI to outwit AI.

Fudan University became the first to implement formal rules on AI use in November last year, banning the use of generative tools in key research stages such as study design and data analysis, with violations subject to disciplinary action.

Other universities have followed suit. Guidelines jointly issued by Beijing Normal University's School of Journalism and Communication and East China Normal University require stu-

dents to label AI-generated content and limit it to no more than 20 percent of their theses. The Tianjin University of Science and Technology requires AI content to remain below 40 percent.

Kong Lintao, deputy director of academic affairs at Tianjin University of Science and Technology, told China Central Television that the policy is designed to allow students to use AI for basic assistance while ensuring the core academic work remains student-led.

Online searches for how to reduce "AI rates" in theses have surged. As demand grows, services promising to lower detection scores have emerged. Providers often offer two approaches: manual editing or using AI to rewrite content in a less detectable form.

Xu Ziya, a senior at the Huazhong University of Science and Technology, told China Daily she has turned to social media tutorials on platforms such as Xiaohongshu to help reduce the AI rate in her journalism thesis. She used AI to summarize interviews she conducted, finding it more effective than doing it manually.

Her university caps AI usage at 20 percent, and she said she was able to reduce her detection score from 24 percent to 3.8 percent. Techniques include turning short sentences into longer ones or vice versa, avoiding formal conjunc-

tions and using more casual language.

"If these methods don't work, just rewrite, paraphrase or delete the whole paragraph," she said.

"I think the AI detection methods are not sophisticated, and the detection rates vary on different platforms," she added. "These platforms use AI to detect AI, so sometimes they judge human writing as machine-generated and vice versa."

Zhou Weijiang, founder of FuturX AI, voiced skepticism toward detection systems, saying they rely too much on indicators such as overly formal wording or flawless logic. In one case, classic essays such as Zhu Ziqing's *Moonlight Over the Lotus Pond* and Wang Bo's *Preface to the Pavilion of Prince Teng* were flagged as being 62.88 percent and 78.52 percent AI-generated, respectively.

Zhao Pin, an associate professor at the School of Public Administration of the China University of Geosciences in Wuhan, said detection results should serve only as references, not decisive criteria for thesis evaluation.

She cautioned that students might degrade their academic work in an effort to game the system.

"We should not let algorithmic assessments outweigh the academic judgment of faculty," she said.

AI helps treat critically ill infants in Guangzhou

By LI WENFANG in Guangzhou
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A hospital in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, recently launched a large artificial intelligence model to assist medical workers and parents in the screening, diagnosis, treatment and care of critically ill infants.

The new model, NeoAI Precision, was jointly developed by the Guangzhou Women and Children's Medical Center and Digital Health China Technologies Co. It is designed to support clinical decision-making within critical time windows.

Built on the Chinese-developed AI model DeepSeek and clinical data from multiple neonatal intensive care units, NeoAI Precision was developed through contributions from leading medical experts across the country. By integrating real-time data, it can rapidly assess an infant's condition, trigger alerts and recommend timely interventions, according to the hospital.

"Many diseases in infants are atypical and call for the support of large volumes of data for early diagnosis," said Zhou Wenhao, president of the Guangzhou Women and Children's Medical Center.

About 5.6 percent of newborns are born with birth defects of varying severity, many of which are not immediately apparent. The model aids in early detection before clinical symptoms appear by combining the results of genetic screening, lab tests, imaging examinations and other assessments.

NeoAI Precision also helps identify rare and complex diseases by drawing on multidisciplinary expertise and analyzing diverse, multimodal NICU data.

Premature babies, who are especially fragile, make up a significant portion of NICU patients. Those

weighing less than 1 kilogram at birth typically require NICU care for one to two months.

Zhou said NICUs face complex challenges, including rapid and unpredictable changes in infants' conditions, time-sensitive decision-making, and difficulty managing fragmented information and diverse disease presentations.

Other challenges include the constant introduction of new equipment and treatment methods, a lack of standardized diagnosis and treatment protocols, uneven distribution of medical resources, and low accuracy in screening for inherited metabolic disorders.

"About 5 percent of infants with serious illnesses are treated in NICUs, where they are monitored by equipment," Zhou said. "AI technology helps integrate the indicators and make judgments in the shortest time possible. In an NICU, we need a very experienced team. But it takes decades of training to develop a good doctor."

Unlike general AI models, which often fall short in clinical applications due to insufficient scenario adaptability and limited specialty knowledge, NeoAI Precision is capable of detecting subtle changes in clinical symptoms to help doctors apply early and precise treatment.

The system is accessible for free on mobile phones and computers, and also provides parents with post-discharge education and guidance on infant care. In addition, it supports training for healthcare workers at grassroots medical institutions, with a focus on premature baby care, risk assessment and standardized infant transfer procedures.

Zhou said the model will continue to evolve and is expected to be piloted in 50 to 60 hospitals for further testing.

Robot rumble



A referee counts down for a fallen robot that was knocked down by another during a match at the world's first humanoid robot fighting competition in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. CCTV+

All set for Thursday's Tianwen mission launch

By ZHAO LEI

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China is set to launch its first asteroid sampling mission, Tianwen 2, on Thursday, according to the China National Space Administration.

The administration said in a brief news release on Monday that the decision was made by the mission headquarters after comprehensive analyses and deliberations.

"Pre-launch preparations are steadily moving forward at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center, and the Long March 3B carrier rocket tasked with the launch is about to receive propellants," the release said.

By Monday, both the Tianwen 2 robotic probe and rocket had been assembled and undergone functional checks, it added.

According to mission planners, the primary objective of Tianwen 2, the country's second interplanetary expedition, is to recover samples from the near-Earth asteroid 2016 HO3, also known as 469219 Kamo'oalewa, a quasi-satellite of Earth and a potential fragment of the moon.

The spacecraft will employ a touch-and-go sampling technique, similar to Japan's Hayabusa 2 and NASA's OSIRIS-REx, to collect surface materials and then fly back to Earth's orbit, where its reentry module containing the samples will be released for atmospheric

entry, descent and landing.

Meanwhile, the main body of the Tianwen 2 probe will use the Earth's gravity to set it on course for a new voyage to a main-belt comet called 311P to continue its scientific exploration tasks.

2016 HO3 was first spotted in April 2016 by an asteroid survey telescope at the Haleakala High Altitude Observatory in Hawaii.

The celestial body orbits the sun, so it remains a constant companion of Earth. It is too distant to be considered a true moon of Earth, but it is the best and most stable example to date of a near-Earth companion, or quasi-moon. Scientists believe that it contains clues to the solar system's early history, including its original composition and the process of its formation and evolution.

Comet 311P is part of the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Its physical composition is like those of comets, but its orbital characteristics resemble those of asteroids, according to astrophysicists.

Tianwen missions, named after an ancient Chinese poem, cover China's interplanetary exploration endeavors.

Tianwen 1 was launched in July 2020, and it successfully touched down on Mars in May 2021. The probe deployed a rover, named Zhurong, to explore the Red Planet. Zhurong was the sixth rover on Mars, after five that were deployed by the United States.

Scientists develop contact lenses surpassing human eye

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Finding a better solution for visual disorders such as color blindness, a team of scientists from home and abroad have jointly devised a unique contact lens that surpasses current human visual capabilities. These contact lenses capture things even naked eyes cannot see, according to the researchers.

In their research, the scientists, including those from the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei, Anhui province, and Fudan University in Shanghai, ingeniously combined rare earth particles emitting multiple fluorescence signals with contact lenses. By wearing such special lenses, human eyes can perceive light beyond the visible spectrum into the near-infrared range, allowing individuals to access multi-dimensional information in terms of time, space, and color from near-infrared light.

"With the aid of such invisible glasses, people can see things that were previously invisible to them," said Zhang Fan, one of the lead researchers on the team and a professor of chemistry from Fudan University.

"And for individuals suffering from color blindness, by supplementing visible light information with near-infrared wavelengths, wearers can enhance their ability to differentiate between colors like red and green," he said.

The research results also hold vast application potentials in fields, such as information processing and visual assistance technologies, said the researchers.

"For example, information encoding transmission and decryption can all be carried out in the near-infrared band. If using near-infrared light to light up particular information such as patterns, only those who wear the special contact lenses can see the patterns, while those who don't will never see them as the near-in-

frared bands are outside the range of their visual perception," said Zhang.

Scientists explained that there are cone cells on human's retina that respond specifically to the primary colors of red, green and blue. The proportion of activation in these cells responding to the three colors determines the colors that people see.

However, compared to the broad optical spectrum in nature, the human eye can only perceive wavelengths ranging from 400 to 700 nanometers, leading to the neglect of a significant amount of potential information. By extending perception to the near-infrared range, 700 to 2,500 nanometers, the technology may open up possibilities for pushing boundaries for human vision.

"Rare earth elements possess unique optical properties, allowing the conversion of different colors of light through near-infrared excitation. By discerning the fluorescence colors of nano-particles, individu-

als can identify near-infrared wavelengths invisible to the naked eye, realizing the recognition of near-infrared 'colors,'" said Chen Zihan, a researcher on the team from Fudan University.

The team further modified the surface of the nano-particles and dispersed them in polymer solutions, ultimately creating highly transparent contact lenses.

In their research, volunteers who wore the contact lenses were able to perceive near-infrared light through the fluorescence of red, green and blue visible wavelength bands, and distinguish various compositions of near-infrared light wavelengths and patterns. This demonstrated the effective utilization of near-infrared images using multi-color rare earth luminescent materials, said the scientists.

A paper about the research, a collaborative effort between domestic and international research institutions, was published in the journal Cell on Thursday.

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CHINA

Man uses skill to carve out good living

Hunan master craftsman passes on techniques to others with disabilities

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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A disabled man from Dong'an county, Hunan province, is passing on his masterful skills in intricate wood carving to the next generation, and his inclusive approach is enabling younger persons with disabilities to learn his techniques and forge their own careers.

Tang Guoqiang, today a successful wood carver with his own studio and multiple awards, experienced a life-changing incident at the age of 9 after a fall on an icy road led to a diagnosis of acute myelitis, which led to him becoming paralyzed from the waist down.

Shortly after the diagnosis, Tang's mother passed away and his brother lost his leg in an accident. It all felt too much at the time for the young man.

"I thought my life was over," he said.

In 2002, urged by his father to pick up a skill, Tang picked up a rusty hacksaw blade from a scrapyards

and started practicing carving on discarded furniture.

From then on Tang spend hours whittling away at wood, enduring much frustration and difficulty, to hone his skills to a new craft.

Undeterred by having to teach himself, the satisfaction of improving drove him ever onward. "Others could be much more mobile, but I had to press my elbows hard just to steady the wood," he said.

His breakthrough came in 2010 at skills competition for people with disabilities in Hunan, where judges were stunned as he carved out a delicate piece with a manual hacksaw blade. "His blade moved faster than the electric chisels," remarked Xiao Shaoshan, a master craftsman who later became Tang's mentor. Under Xiao's tutelage, Tang further sharpened his skills, filling the studio with wood shavings "taller than his wheelchair".

In 2014, Tang founded the Yuming Carving Studio with local government support, instituting a unique pricing principle: works by deaf-



Tang Guoqiang works at his Yuming Carving Studio in Dong'an county, Hunan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

mute artisans commanded the highest prices, followed by those with physical disabilities, while pieces by able-bodied creators were the cheapest.

"They need opportunities, not just skills," he said, explaining that those with the most obstacles should be given the most opportunities. In 2018, his perseverance bore fruit when his intricate piece *Silk Road Melody* won the Golden Phoenix Award, China's highest honor in wood carving.

His most expensive work, which depicts the pilgrimage of a famous Chinese monk, Xuanzang (602-664), along the ancient Silk Road,

sold for 120,000 yuan (\$16,700), a milestone that affirmed his artistic recognition and offered him much-needed confidence.

It took him six months to meticulously carve the figures on the 30-centimeter tall and 30-cm wide piece.

Tang's studio has become a sanctuary for disabled apprentices.

"I teach them to carve walking sticks first — it's about patience and willpower," he said, requiring students to ruin 49 sticks before mastering the craft.

His own journey, shaped by adversity, has fueled his mission to empower others.

"I want them to stand on their own, not rely on family," he said.

Over the past 30 years, Tang has created over 700 pieces.

Deeply influenced by the Long March (1934-36) spirit, Tang channeled his reverence into art. For the Communist Party of China's centenary, he crafted a root carving featuring 100 miniature Red Army soldiers hidden within a torch, some no larger than grains of rice. "The Long March taught me to conquer despair," he said.

His studio's motto is inherited from his father: "30 percent skill, 70 percent grit, 100 percent humility, a century to nurture talent", is echoed

in packaging crates dispatched nationwide. Tang remains dedicated to teaching and creating. His workshops blend online sales on short-video platform Douyin and e-commerce platform Taobao, with word-of-mouth acclaim.

Tang Zhijie, one of his apprentices, said Tang Guoqiang is very strict with them, and he teaches them all his skills so they can make a difference on their own one day.

"Wood never lies," Tang Guoqiang said while chiseling a lightning bolt into the log of his next masterpiece.

Zhu Youfang in Changsha contributed to this story.

Mold maker preserves family tradition

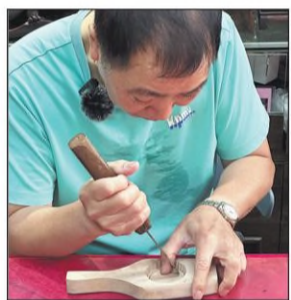
GUANGZHOU — Yu Zhaoji works swiftly yet steadily on a piece of wood using his specialized carving knife.

Within minutes, delicate carved lines appeared along the circular groove in the wood, forming the perfect base for a mooncake mold. For over half a century, the 65-year-old has honed the craft, continuing a family tradition that spans 160 years.

Yu's family business, Yu Tong Shop, is the last remaining maker of handmade traditional Cantonese pastry molds in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province and a heartland of Cantonese culture.

Founded by Yu's great-great-grandfather in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Yu Tong Shop has been producing hand-carved molds for a wide range of traditional Cantonese pastries — not only mooncakes, but also dowry cakes and phoenix cookies — serving restaurants, pastry shops and households alike.

For centuries, handmade molds have played a vital role in crafting Cantonese pastries, with dough pressed into beautifully carved patterns set within grooves of various shapes. Before machines began replacing manual labor in mold making around the 2000s, Yu Tong Shop was bustling with orders from restaurants and bakeries, especially dur-



Yu Zhaoji carves a pastry mold at his store in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on May 19. HUANG SHUO / XINHUA

ing its peak years between the 1970s and 1990s.

Today, according to Yu, handmade molds have all but disappeared from Guangzhou's food industry, as their intricate carving and polishing processes make them far more expensive than machine-made alternatives. "You know, speed is everything in today's world," he said, without a pause in his hands as he continued to carve. Speed, nevertheless, is the very opposite of pastry mold carving, a craft that demands years of learning and practice to master.

The wood used for mold making

must go through a two-year air-drying process before carving can begin, and crafting a handmade pastry mold involves dozens of meticulous steps. Still, Yu believes machines will never surpass humans in his craft.

"Machine work is too uniform. It has no soul," he said, adding that handmade pieces are inherently unique, much like how the left and right sides of a person's face can never be exactly the same.

Yu still makes and sells pastry molds to high-end restaurants in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, as well as to clients in Australia, the United States and, as he puts it, "wherever there are Chinese".

"After all, their roots are here, and they have profound sentiments for traditions and traditional things," he said.

Yu noted that he doesn't worry too much about passing down the mold carving craft to the next generation of his family, who have chosen what he calls "more profitable" career paths. He has also taken on a few apprentices, though for them, mold carving remains just a hobby. Still, Yu hopes this ancestral craft will endure for generations to come.

In August 2020, Guangzhou's first intangible cultural heritage district opened to the public. It is part of the Yongqing Block, a historic downtown

community revitalized by a renovation project launched by the local government in 2016.

The government aims to use the district, which offers space for the display and sale of 13 intangible cultural heritage traditions of Guangzhou, to promote the integration of culture and tourism, as well as the preservation and continuation of traditional craftsmanship.

Yu Tong Shop was relocated from its original site to the district, where it became a master's studio alongside 12 other traditional arts and crafts, including Canton enamel, Canton embroidery, bone carving and lion dancing.

In his new storefront, Yu now demonstrates his carving techniques to curious tourists visiting the Yongqing Block — a popular destination in Guangzhou — from across China and abroad.

He also provides pastry mold carving workshops, both commercial sessions open to the public and non-commercial ones supported and subsidized by the government. Participants span all age groups, from young children to seniors. According to Yu, handmade items continue to appeal to many enthusiasts since they are crafted with heart and imbued with "warmth and emotion".

"If you've made a mold yourself, even if it's not perfect, the pastries made with it will taste better," Yu said.

XINHUA

Eco-hub offers meeting space for nature lovers

By CHEN LIANG
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Eco-tours, especially those focused on nature education, have gained popularity in China in recent years as more Chinese are willing to develop their interests in natural history.

On May 18, dozens of natural history enthusiasts gathered in a store at the West Gate of Olympic Forest Park's North Garden in Beijing to celebrate the opening of Naturewin Eco-Creation Hub.

The hub combines a nature-themed book cafe, a nature experience center, a nature school and an eco-tour agency, aiming to nurture naturalists among the capital's residents.

"As British zoologist Dr Jane Goodall said, 'We can all be naturalists,'" Zhao Chao, founder and CEO of Beijing Naturewin Tech, said at the opening ceremony. "We expect that our hub will become a place where nature lovers can meet and grow together."

The establishment of this space received significant support from various organizations, including Beijing Olympic Forest Park, Zeiss Optics and Chinese National Geographic Books.

It has become the city's first experience center for Zeiss binoculars and telescopes.

The hub was completed before Chinese New Year, Zhao said, and after a three-month trial run, it is now officially open to the public. Visitors can read nature-related books and photo albums, attend parent-child nature courses every weekend and participate in nature experiences suitable for all ages. Additionally, primary and secondary school students can engage in nature study activities here.

"We offer bird-watching tours at

Olympic Forest Park every weekend," Zhao said.

Zhao, who has a graduate degree of ornithology, established Naturewin 10 years ago, dedicated to promoting nature education and eco-tours in the country.

During the opening ceremony, renowned children's book author Bao Dongni, plant-themed nonfiction author Shi Jun, and wildlife photographer and scientific illustrator Zhang Yu, shared their captivating nature experiences with enthusiasts and donated their books to the space.

Bao recounted stories of her travels with Naturewin to the Arctic and Antarctic, the Galapagos Islands and the East African savannas.

Shi gave a talk titled "The History of China in a Bowl of Rice", discussing the origins and development of grains from various continents, especially China. Shi's latest books, *The History of Grains*, *The History of Fruits* and *The History of Vegetables*, were given to lucky audience members.

Zhang shared his experiences in places like Olympic Forest Park — the feeding habits of the little grebe, eating behaviors of the common merganser, nesting behavior of magpies and foraging behavior of blackbirds. These are common species in Beijing that ordinary people can observe, offering an experience as fascinating as watching a documentary. His book, *What Animals Taught Me*, was also given to lucky enthusiasts.

Since its founding in 2016, Naturewin has been committed to creating a natural lifestyle for Chinese families through practices in nature travel, education and conservation, promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.



The Naturewin Eco-Creation Hub offers a meeting place for Beijing's nature lovers. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese web literature wins hearts in Japanese market

OSAKA, Japan — Japanese screenwriter and director Hikaru Takeuchi is an avid fan of the Chinese web novel *Apocalyptic Forecast*, a fantasy fiction about a disillusioned young man who gains mysterious powers and is drawn into a hidden world of supernatural conflict and secret societies.

"Translating Chinese web novels has become my favorite way to unwind as it brings me a sense of fulfillment," said Takeuchi.

Although she studied classical Chinese literature in school, she had little exposure to the online genre. That changed when work introduced her to *Apocalyptic Forecast*, which, in her words, "opened up a whole new world". She was especially struck by the multidimensional characters and the emotional complexity of the protagonist, whose joy and struggles resonated with her.

When the novel ended, Takeuchi felt compelled to write a letter to its author, Feng Yue. The cross-border fan mail became a symbolic bridge between cultures. Speaking with Xinhua News Agency in a recent interview, she expressed her hope of introducing more Japanese readers

to the rich and emotional world of Chinese web literature.

Now, Takeuchi is not just a fan, but also a translator and grassroots promoter of Chinese web literature. Over the past three years, she has translated more than 200 chapters of *Apocalyptic Forecast* into Japanese and shared them with friends.

As Chinese online literature expands abroad, a growing number of overseas readers are becoming not just consumers, but translators, creators and even co-developers of new intellectual properties.

She is now planning to participate in the "Fiction Formula" contest — a joint initiative by WebNovel, a platform under China's Yuewen Group, and Japan's CCC Group, which owns the Tsutaya bookstore chain, to try her hand at original writing.

"Japan still relies heavily on cash payments, but through Chinese novels, I've learned about mobile payments and everyday life in Chinese high schools. It's fascinating," Takeuchi said.

For many Japanese readers, Chinese online literature offers a blend of novelty and relatability, a fresh yet

accessible lens into contemporary Chinese society.

The success of *Apocalyptic Forecast* in Japan is far from isolated. Other Chinese web novels, including *Joy of Life*, *The King's Avatar*, and *Battle Through the Heavens*, have also gained loyal followings through localized publishing, anime adaptations and manga spin-offs.

The King's Avatar has been downloaded over 30 million times in Japanese, and its animated film was screened in nine countries and regions, including Japan, the Philippines and Singapore. Its manga version has received nearly 8 million likes on the manga app Piccoma.

Takeuchi also praised the anime adaptation of *Dragon Raja*, a Chinese fantasy novel by Jiang Nan, calling it high-quality and widely loved in Japan. She believes that as more Chinese novels evolve into anime, films and comics, their cultural influence in Japan will deepen.

According to Yuewen Group, by the end of 2024, its international platform WebNovel had launched around 6,800 translated works, supported 460,000 overseas authors and

released roughly 700,000 original stories globally.

With nearly 300 million users across over 200 countries and regions, the platform is quickly becoming a dominant player in global online storytelling. The Japanese market stands out, with a 180-percent user surge in 2024 alone, ranking among the top five growth markets alongside Spain, Brazil, France and Germany.

Shinichiro Kamaura, executive director of CCC Group, voiced optimism about building a new cross-cultural IP ecosystem in partnership with Chinese firms. He emphasized the potential of blending cultural elements and shared values to inspire a new generation of Japanese creators.

Yuewen Group CEO and President Hou Xiaonan added that web fiction, now a leading force in China's cultural exports, is entering a new phase of global co-creation.

To truly succeed abroad, he said, Chinese stories must be localized — not just translated — in ways that resonate with new audiences.

XINHUA

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CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY



Left: Automatic handcarts are being used to transport packages by SF Express in a logistics park in Haikou, Hainan province, on May 15. LI SHANGYI / CHINA DAILY **Center:** Students put packaging boxes away for recycling after use at a service station at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology in March 2023. LI MUYI / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** Eco-friendly packaging boxes are displayed at the booth of SF Express during the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing in September. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

China continues push for greener packaging

By LI SHANGYI
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Express delivery companies taking action to reduce waste

With express delivery ubiquitous in China, where almost 175 billion packages were delivered last year, the public and private sectors are taking steps to address the reduction of packaging waste and forge a more sustainable way forward for the rapidly growing industry.

Last year, express deliveries in China reached 174.5 billion, the most for any country in the world for the 11th straight year, and a rise of 21 percent year-on-year.

According to a report released by the State Post Bureau, in 2022 alone, approximately 9.92 billion packaging boxes and about 16.98 billion meters of tape were consumed in China's express delivery sector.

This staggering volume has raised growing concerns about the environmental impact of packaging waste and excessive material consumption.

As of June 1, the State Council will require express delivery companies to promote greener, reduced and reusable express packaging, according to an updated regulation on the industry. The update stresses that eco-friendly, biodegradable and reusable materials are used in express delivery packaging, while avoiding excessive and wasteful packaging.

In recent years, major express delivery companies in China and postal authorities have made efforts to reduce material use, recycle packaging materials and develop degradable materials, however, more action is still needed.

Reduced materials

Express delivery companies typically repack goods using their own branded boxes, however, more recently, some shipments are being made using original boxes to save on excess packaging.

Gao Jiaqi, who is in charge of JDL Express' intelligent logistics park in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, said direct shipments are becoming more commonplace.

"When goods arrive at our warehouses from the manufacturers, we ship them directly to consumers without any repackaging," Gao said. JDL is the logistics branch of the e-commerce platform JD.

"Couriers only need to put an express waybill on the original package for goods suitable for direct shipments, such as packed tissues and diapers, and small electronic devices in individual packages," Gao said.

In total, direct shipment helped JDL reduce over 1 billion repackagings last year.

ZTO Express, another major express delivery company in China, has been promoting the same practice. "Currently, all warehouses prioritize shipping goods in their original packaging from merchants," said Xu Yonggui, head of the marketing and branding department of ZTO Cloud Warehouse Supply Technology.

While direct shipment without repackaging reduces costs and waste, the product categories suitable for the shipment remain limited. "Smartphones and beauty products cannot be shipped directly in their original packaging," said Xu.

Since 2022, nearly 300 of ZTO's



Piles of packages are processed at a distribution center in Zaozhuang, Shandong province, on May 1. WANG LONGFEI / XINHUA

Couriers expand low-carbon logistics

Dozens of new energy vehicles line up outside a distribution center of Deppon Express in Haikou, Hainan province. Once loaded with packages, these NEVs fan out across the city, delivering goods with a smaller carbon footprint.

Transportation is one of the most energy-intensive aspects of express delivery. In response to pressure to reduce the environmental impact of the logistics industry, major express delivery companies, such as JDL Express, ZTO Express, Deppon Express and SF Express, have been gradually replacing

fossil fuel-powered vehicles with new energy alternatives.

Deppon Express operates 327 NEVs across Hainan, accounting for more than 70 percent of its delivery fleet in the province.

SF Express is also accelerating its adoption of NEVs for short-distance deliveries in Hainan.

The company has introduced NEVs through procurement, rentals and by encouraging couriers to use their own NEVs. SF Express operates 435 NEVs in the province, representing over 60 percent of its local transport fleet.

ZTO Express is deploying NEVs in urban delivery networks across cities such as Beijing, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, and Chengdu in Sichuan province. The company has added more than 100 NEVs to its delivery network, resulting in an estimated annual reduction of carbon emissions by 300 metric tons.

As of the end of last year, JDL Express was operating 10,000 NEVs for both truck transportation and last-mile delivery routes. The company is also using hydrogen-powered trucks on 64 transport routes, cutting annual diesel

consumption by 600,000 liters and reducing carbon emissions by approximately 1,000 tons, it said.

Beyond vehicle upgrades, JDL has also embraced clean energy infrastructure. The company has installed rooftop photovoltaic systems at multiple logistics centers, achieving a total installed capacity of 139.22 megawatts. In one year, these systems can generate 61,143 megawatt-hours of electricity, resulting in a reduction of 50,902 tons of carbon emissions.

LI SHANGYI

warehouses nationwide have used an intelligent system to recommend the most efficient repackaging.

"Suitable packaging avoids overpackaging, lowers costs and improves consumers' shopping experience," said Bian Yanjue, director of the customer service department of Beingmate, a corporate client of ZTO.

Express delivery companies have also been exploring ways to reduce material usage in packaging.

In 2023, JDL said it cut its use of cardboard boxes from between 5 to 25 percent by changing their design.

Last year, over 860 million of these upgraded boxes were used, reducing 12,164 metric tons of carbon emissions, the company said.

JDL said it had also reduced plastic in its express bags by 20 percent.

"To reduce plastic tape usage, we no longer use the traditional cross-wrapping method," Xu said.

"Instead, we now secure packages using one to three strips of tape, depending on the box size." These more efficient taping methods have also been widely adopted across the industry.

Recycle and reuse

Despite more efficient material use, single-use packaging still generates a significant amount of waste. To extend the life cycle of boxes, express delivery companies and postal services have introduced reusable circulation boxes designed for multiple uses.

Reusable plastic boxes are circulating in logistics stations of JDL Express, SF Express and Deppon Express for inter-station transportation, saving space and packaging.

In Haikou, Hainan province, reusable boxes are being used for the delivery of resident ID cards via a collaboration between the local post office and the province's ID card production center.

"Once an ID card is produced, it

is transferred to the post office, which then delivers it either directly to individuals or to one of 415 police stations across the province for residents to collect," said Zeng Qiqi, director of the marketing department of China Post in Hainan.

The waterproof reusable boxes have been used for delivering ID cards in Hainan since 2023, according to Zeng. "These boxes can be used over 50 times. After delivering a batch to the police station, we retrieve the empty box for reuse in the next delivery. For individual deliveries, we use biodegradable packaging instead," he said.

While the amended regulation puts more emphasis on the responsibility of express companies, the actions of consumers also matter for waste reduction.

Xu from ZTO noted that product returns by consumers are another significant source of packaging consumption. To address this, ZTO is piloting a specially designed

"If I don't have a box for mailing, the staff give me one for free," Deng said.

"Whenever I open a package, I leave the box here clean and intact so it can be reused."

Biodegradable packaging

From December 1, 2020, Hainan became the first province in China to legislate against nonbiodegradable plastic use. Accordingly, the province has promoted the use of fully biodegradable plastics, which have been widely applied in the local express delivery industry.

Zhongkexinhui (Hainan) New Material Technology Co, established in 2019, produces fully biodegradable packaging bags in cooperation with the Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Its annual production capacity of fully biodegradable plastics is 10,000 tons, including 3,000 tons for express packaging bags.

Wu Jun, the company's president, said that these fully biodegradable bags have gone through rigorous quality tests and fulfill express packaging requirements. "Thanks to government support and policy promotion, express companies have become aware of the importance of degradability," he said.

Last year, 13 million fully degradable bags were sold. A surge in demand was seen from January to March this year, with over 7 million being sold during the period, according to Wu. The company's clients include major express firms such as Yunda Express, ZTO Express, STO Express and YTO Express.

Lu Bo, a senior engineer from the CAS institute, said that the fully biodegradable material is made of PBAT and PLA, and decomposes into water and carbon dioxide in compost within 180 days. PBAT and PLA are biodegradable polymers made from corn starch.

"Though the cost of the biodegradable material is relatively high, application on a larger scale could help lower the cost," said Lu. "Promoting biodegradable materials in the express delivery industry is meaningful as it has wide coverage and could raise public awareness of environmental protection."

To meet the requirements of the plastic ban, SF Express in Hainan has used fully biodegradable packaging bags and degradable tapes since 2021. Over 40 million bags have been used since 2021, and degradable tapes are used in all delivery stations across the province, according to Shen Qi, head of SF Express' green packaging project.

These degradable materials will be promoted gradually across the country, Shen said.

Zhu Li, deputy director of the industry department at the development and research center of the State Post Bureau, said that as green packaging in the express delivery sector involves multiple stages from production, usage and recycling to disposal, coordinated efforts across the entire supply chain are essential.

"The amended regulation specifies responsibilities of relevant parties in promoting green express packaging and outlines enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, providing a solid legal foundation for managing sustainability throughout the industry chain," Zhu said.

WORLD

US gov't faces lawsuits over tariff orders

Imposition of trade measures using emergency powers to be challenged

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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The Trump administration is facing mounting legal challenges over its sweeping tariff policies, with at least seven lawsuits filed by states, businesses and individuals challenging the president's authority to impose broad trade measures using emergency powers legislation.

Experts believe the lawsuits have a decent chance of success but also warn that the slow legal process means continued uncertainty for businesses grappling with the new tariffs.

Since February, the Trump administration has issued a series of executive orders declaring a national emergency and imposing tariffs on all imports. The administration invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977, or IEEPA, to justify the tariffs, marking the first time this law has been used for such broad trade measures.

The new tariffs include a 10 percent baseline tariff on nearly all imports and sharply higher duties on Chinese goods and foreign automobiles. However, the administration has temporarily reduced the 145 percent tariffs on Chinese imports to 30 percent until Aug 12 and paused a slate of so-called "reciprocal tariffs" against more than 50 countries until July 8.

The lawsuits allege the president lacks the authority to impose tariffs under IEEPA, arguing that the law, which empowers the president to impose sanctions in response to international emergencies, does not authorize the imposition of tariffs and that the executive orders constitute a violation of the separation of powers in the United States.

"These cases have a good chance of success, because the Constitution gives Congress the authority to regulate trade and tariffs," Robert O'Brien, research director at Counterpoint Research, told China Daily. "In the past, almost always, when tariffs were implemented, it was from an act of Congress, and the president's authority is greatest when they're working in concert with Congress. And in this case, Congress was not at all involved in all of these tariffs and executive orders."

"But the legal system takes a long time to resolve, so that continues the level of uncertainty for businesses," he added.

Vada Garcia, a specialist for policy and government affairs at the Consumer Technology Association, echoed similar concerns about the legal foundation of the tariffs.

"It's important to note the legal authority that is being used for these tariffs — IEEPA ... is on very shaky legal ground and something that's never been done before," she said at a recent panel discussion examining the tariffs' impact on consumer electronics. "If one of those lawsuits is successful, that's going to set a precedent for tariffs."

The lawsuits are of particular

importance to the consumer technology industry, as the highest tariffs were imposed on Chinese imports, and China is a major supplier of consumer electronic products in the United States.

"They're responsible for 87 percent of imports of video game consoles, 79 percent of imports of laptops and tablets, 67 percent of imports of monitors. So that's going to be an issue that the consumer technology industry, as a whole, is going to have to grapple with," Garcia explained.

California became the first state to sue the Trump administration over the tariffs. In the complaint filed last month, the state argued that the tariffs will create substantial economic harm in various forms, including lost tax revenue and impacts on the state's ability to import and export goods.

'Reckless actions'

"California, as the fifth-largest economy in the world and the country's most populous state, stands to suffer unique harm from President Trump's reckless and unprecedented actions on tariffs," the complaint said.

Twelve other states, including Oregon, Illinois and New York, challenged the tariffs in the Court of International Trade, alleging that Trump unconstitutionally imposed tariffs on foreign products and that the tariffs caused direct financial harm to the states.

Their complaint cited an example of the University of Oregon, which ordered specialized equipment for scientific research from Switzerland in November but had to pay an extra \$18,579 when the equipment arrived after the tariffs went into effect.

The lawsuit filed by Liberty Justice Center on behalf of five businesses that rely on international imports emphasized the human and economic toll of unchecked executive power.

MicroKits, one of the plaintiffs, is a small business based in Charlottesville, Virginia, that makes educational electronic kits and musical instruments. The company imports electronic components and then assembles and finishes the products in its local workshop.

The owner, David Levi, described the tariffs as "devastating" and "crushing" for the company. "The government shouldn't be able to make sweeping economic decisions like this without any checks or accountability," he said in a statement.

O'Brien predicted the lawsuits "are going all the way to the Supreme Court and Supreme Court would have to weigh in."

He referenced the Supreme Court's ruling on the student loan forgiveness program in 2023, where the court ruled that the Biden administration could not forgive student loans because it constituted a major economic disruption without congressional authority.

"I think student loans are a small fraction of what's going on here with the tariffs," O'Brien said.



A man clears the remains of a damaged house in Multan, Pakistan, on Sunday, a day after strong winds, thunder and lightning hit the area. At least 19 people were killed and over 90 others injured as severe weather, including hailstorms, lashed several districts across Pakistan's Punjab Province, an official statement said on Sunday. SHAHID SAIED MIRZA / AFP

George Floyd's uncertain legacy marked

MINNEAPOLIS — Police reform and civil-rights activists joined thousands of ordinary people in the United States on Sunday to mark the fifth anniversary of George Floyd's murder and decry the Trump administration for actions they say set their efforts back decades.

Floyd's deadly arrest on May 25, 2020 helped launch the Black Lives Matter movement, or BLM, into a powerful force that sought to resolve deeply rooted racial issues in the US, from police violence to systemic inequality.

But since Trump's return to power in January — he was serving his first term when Floyd died — his administration has axed civil rights investigations and cracked down on diversity hiring initiatives.

BLM, meanwhile, finds itself lacking the support it enjoyed when protesters sprawled across US cities and abroad during the COVID pandemic, with many now agreeing the movement achieved little of substance.

Some Democratic politicians, as well as UN rights chief Volker Turk, commemorated the anniversary on Sunday.

"As anti-racism, inclusion efforts & law enforcement reforms face serious setbacks, we must continue advocating for racial justice &

equality globally — with greater determination & strength," Turk wrote on X.

A memorial event was held during the weekend at what has been named George Floyd Square, the area of Minneapolis where the 46-year-old took his final breath as police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck during an arrest.

Dozens of people on Sunday visited the small junction set in a residential part of the northern US city, which is covered with protest art, including a purple mural that reads "You Changed the World, George".

Optimism gone

That optimistic message painted in 2020 is now, however, at odds with a president whose more extreme allies have suggested he pardon Chauvin, who was convicted of murdering Floyd and sentenced to more than 22 years in prison.

Floyd's family members told Agence France-Presse on Friday that they wanted people to continue pushing for reform despite the hostile political climate.

"We don't need an executive order to tell us that Black lives matter," said his aunt Angela Harrelson, who wore a dark T-shirt depicting Floyd's face.

"We cannot let a setback be a

holdback for the great comeback," she added.

Protests marking Floyd's death have also been planned in a handful of other US cities, including Chicago and Dallas, but no major rallies were expected.

In Minneapolis, some people cried and others laid flowers or stuffed animals by the roadside spot where Floyd's fatal arrest was filmed and shared around the world.

"George Floyd may be resting in peace and power, but he's alive through everyone that shows up here," W.D. Foster-Graham, an author who grew up in the same neighborhood, told AFP on Sunday.

"It can be very easy to forget, but as one person to another, make sure we never forget and let those powers that be know we haven't forgotten, and we're not going away," the 73-year-old added.

Memorial events have been held annually since Floyd's death and the theme for this one — "The People Have Spoken" — was suggested by Nelson Mandela's grandson Nkosi when he visited the square, according to Floyd's aunt Harrelson.

She said the defiant title was meant to reflect five years of protesting, adding that "even though it's tiresome, we go on".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

UNITED STATES Mass shooting leaves 11 hurt in South Carolina

At least 11 people were taken to hospitals after a shooting on Sunday night in a South Carolina beach town, authorities said. Horry County Police did not give the conditions of anyone hurt or detail how they were injured in the incident, which happened about 9:30 pm in Little River. Investigators were getting reports of more people arriving at the hospital in private vehicles, the police said. About 90 minutes after the shooting, police called it an isolated incident and said there was no risk to the community.

DPRK Senior official detained for failed warship launch

Law enforcement authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have detained a senior official who was "largely responsible" for the failed launch of the newly built 5,000-ton-class destroyer last week, the official Korean Central News Agency said on Monday. They summoned and detained Ri Hyong-son, vice department director of the Munitions Industry Department of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, according to KCNA.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

California welcomes Terracotta Warriors and more

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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For Sean O'Harrow, president of the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, California, the return of the Terracotta Warriors is more than a curatorial milestone — it is the continuation of a deeply personal journey that began in his youth.

Guided by his father, a scholar of Chinese and Vietnamese philology, O'Harrow first visited Xi'an in Shaanxi province as a teenager, an experience that left a lasting impression.

"My father said that an educated person must know about Chinese history, and to know China, one must visit Xi'an and Shaanxi province," O'Harrow told China Daily. "We visited Xi'an for the first time many, many years ago, and it made me understand the importance and scale of Chinese history. Everything I saw blew my mind. It was an unforgettable experience that changed my life forever."

Decades later, O'Harrow now proudly welcomes the Terracotta Warriors to the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, marking the museum's previous hosting of the iconic artifacts in 2008 and 2011. But this year's exhibition, *World of the Terracotta Warriors: New Archaeological Discoveries in Shaanxi in the 21st Century*, goes far beyond previous displays by tracing the origins of Chinese civilization and offering North

American audiences a window into over two millennia of history.

Opening on May 24 and running through Oct 19, the exhibition marks the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the Terracotta Warriors, which is widely regarded as one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century. It features more than 110 newly excavated artifacts from across Shaanxi province, many of which are being exhibited in North America for the first time.

"We aim to present the latest archaeological discoveries from Shaanxi and explore how the Qin Empire was formed," said Jiao Tianlong, chief curator at the Bowers Museum. "This collection offers fresh insights into how the Qin unified China and the ancient civilizations that preceded it."

The immersive journey begins with relics from Shimao, one of the earliest known fortified cities in China, dating back to around 2300 BC. From there, visitors are guided through the Shang (c.16th-11th century BC) and Zhou (c.11th century-256 BC) dynasties, leading up to the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and the life-sized Terracotta Warriors that famously guarded the tomb of Emperor Qinshihuang after he died in 210 BC.

In addition to the iconic warriors, the exhibition showcases exquisitely crafted chariots, ceremonial jade and gold ornaments, ritual bronze vessels and ornate fittings from royal tombs.



Visitors examine a bronze chariot and horses during the *World of the Terracotta Warriors* exhibition at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, California, on Friday. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

Mark Bustamante, director of special exhibition programs at the museum, noted that this year's show goes deeper into the historical timeline. "We're really excited because it reaches back another 2,000 years into the origins of China," he said. "It looks at how different powers and cultures helped shape the nation by introducing technologies like bronze vessels and chariots, which culminated in the unification under Qinshihuang."

The exhibition is also distinguished by its use of modern technology. Through interactive digital elements, visitors can engage with the artifacts in new ways, including a painting station that allows them to color Terracotta Warriors using

traditional palettes once used on the original figures.

For Anne Shih, chairwoman of the Bowers Museum Board of Governors, the exhibition is the fulfillment of a long-awaited dream. "I felt so proud to make this dream come true again," she told China Daily. "We hope this will foster even closer ties between the people of China and the US. This exhibition is a powerful bridge for cultural exchange and mutual understanding."

The exhibition is jointly organized by the Bowers Museum and Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, with support from the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Heritage Administration.

Clown parade



Clowns parade to celebrate National Clown Day in Lima, Peru, on Sunday. The parade features thousands of professional clowns from all over the country. MARTIN MEJIA / AP

BUSINESS

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China, EU and ASEAN should 'deepen' trade ties

By LIU ZHIHUA
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In the face of persistent trade tensions with the United States, China and other economies should deepen regional economic cooperation and defend the multilateral trade system, said a senior trade expert.

Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily that Washington's current economic policies, featuring sweeping tariff hikes, represent a unilateral attempt to rewrite global trade rules to its own advantage.

"These developments have made it more urgent for major economies — such as the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China — to strengthen consensus and deepen cooperation, thereby jointly improving agility and resilience of regional and international supply chains," he said.

"These so-called reciprocal tariffs, even though temporarily paused, have raised the average US tariff rate to nearly 30 percent. That marks a historic regression, undermining the WTO framework that took decades to build," Zhao said.

Citing statistics from international organizations, Zhao showed that global tariff negotiations since 1947 have lowered duties in developed economies to 3 to 5 percent. If unchecked, the US policy reversal may trigger retaliatory cycles, pushing the world into a "jungle economy", jeopardizing 86 percent of global trade that relies on free trade rules.

Since the US announced the so-called liberation-day tariffs package, China's firm stance and calibrated countermeasures have helped bring Washington back to the negotiation table. On May 12, the two countries announced a series of tariff adjustments aimed at easing trade tensions. Still, effective US tariffs on Chinese products remain around 50 percent, far higher than pre-2018 levels, according to Zhao.

"Shared pressure from US tariff measures is pushing China and the EU closer," he emphasized. "Coordination between the two is no longer optional — it's imperative."

"This is a critical window of opportunity for the two sides to deepen cooperation and strengthen economic ties," Zhao said. "By leveraging shared interests, the two sides can push back protectionist disruptions and reinforce the multilateral trade system."

The UIBE president suggested that China-EU collaboration could start with "small yet practical initiatives", and gradually elevate strategic dialogue to higher levels to advance broader partnership.

For instance, China's commitment to green development resonates with the EU's decarbonization efforts, creating opportunity to jointly transform the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) — currently a unilateral carbon pricing instrument — into a multilateral framework consistent with WTO rules and global climate responses.

As for digital economy, China and the EU share common priori-

ties — including digital trade facilitation, standards development and consumer protections. Deeper collaboration on emerging issues such as aligning standards in 6G networks could position China and the EU as key pillars stabilizing the multilateral digital trade system in the future, in contrast to the US' "lackluster engagement" in multilateral e-commerce initiatives.

"Consensus on rules regarding green or digital economy isn't just about economic gains — it's about defending a fair and rules-based multilateral system," he said, adding that resolving lingering disputes, such as the EU's tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, is also essential for building mutual trust.

The expert also emphasized that China and ASEAN are strengthening industrial chain integration under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, particularly by leveraging rules of origin to reshape regional supply chains.

"ASEAN can serve as a 'stabilizer' for China's economic growth amid US tariff pressures," he said. "By relocating production to ASEAN-based industrial parks, Chinese companies can supply to both local and international markets, with or without access to the US market."

"For ASEAN, investments from Chinese companies support local industrialization, job creation, and tax revenues," he said. "It's win-win — as long as China is avoiding domestic industrial hollowing-out." Zhao also noted that China's ability to respond to US unilateralism and hegemony stems from its supply chain resilience, and its capacity to withstand inventory adjustment cycles. He added that China seeks a full removal of unjustified US tariffs linked to the so-called fentanyl issue.

Meanwhile, domestic pressures in the US — ranging from public discontent over supply shortages, rising costs, to broader supply chain disruptions — have pushed US negotiators to adopt a more pragmatic stance, he said.

"Despite the current tariff truce, the US could reinstate suspended tariffs or attach new conditions. Moreover, Washington's habitual use of the so-called 'art of the deal' risks derailing progress with unreasonable and excessive demands," he said, adding that the future of China-US tariff disputes remains highly uncertain.

"Ultimately, it is a matter of endurance," he said. "China has prioritized self-reliance in sci-tech innovation and domestic market expansion, and its new growth drivers have begun to yield results. We are making steady progress despite ongoing challenges."

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's value-added industrial output grew by 6.1 percent on a yearly basis in April.

The manufacturing sector's value-added output increased by 6.6 percent year-on-year, with that of equipment manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing up by 9.8 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

Zhang Rulin contributed to this story.



A robot interacts with visitors at the ongoing 20th Western China International Fair in Chengdu, Sichuan province. CHEN DONGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Fair seen boosting biz in western China

Over 2,200 investment projects worth more than 3.7 trillion yuan presented

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
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The ongoing 20th Western China International Fair, which kicked off on Sunday in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, has seen the signing of 416 investment projects totaling 354.3 billion yuan (\$49.4 billion), the organizing committee said.

The fair, which runs through Thursday, attracted over 3,000 companies from 62 countries and regions and 27 domestic provincial-level administrative regions, including 61 Fortune Global 500 companies.

To showcase the vast opportunities in China's western region, all 12 provincial-level regions in western China jointly presented over 2,200 investment projects worth more than 3.7 trillion yuan under the "Invest in Western China" brand, according to the organizing committee.

Laos and Hungary are guest countries of honor, while more than 20 countries have set up national pavilions.

Gabor Gasko, director of Avicenna Travel Services, a subsidiary of Hun-

gary-based Avicenna Holding, said events such as the ongoing fair strengthen tourism cooperation between Hungary and China.

Gasko said he is optimistic about expanding business in China, as the two countries are connected by more direct flights and China has implemented a visa-free policy for Hungary.

Last year, his company launched a pilot program to bring Chinese students aged 14 to 18 for a two-week summer camp in Hungary, Gasko said. The program will run both in summer and winter this year, with participants projected to increase significantly.

Chen Ping, director of the Hungarian Export Promotion Agency's Southwest China representative office, said his office organized over a dozen Hungarian companies to showcase their products at Hungary's national pavilion, including wines, condiments, snacks and cosmetics.

Hungary's exports to China have maintained an average annual growth of around 20 percent in recent years, while the country has

already established extensive cooperation with China's eastern coastal regions, Chen said.

"China's western region has shown remarkable development momentum and strong market potential," she said. "We look forward to further expanding the market for Hungary's high-quality products through the fair."

Thieng Somsat, chairman of Lao company Meely Decore Sole Co Ltd, said the fair has strengthened his confidence in expanding business operations in China and enhancing collaboration with Chinese partners.

"Laos has abundant high-quality, eco-friendly agricultural products," he said. "We are planning to invite more Chinese partners to visit Laos and introduce more Lao products to the Chinese market."

Lei Lin, chairman of Sichuan Golden Elephant Sincerity Chemical Co Ltd, said his company is seeking more business opportunities in Belt and Road countries through the event.

The company has launched a 4.2 billion yuan melamine-green fertilizer integrated industrial chain project in Indonesia's Gresik special economic zone, he said. The first phase of the project is set to begin operations next year.

Smoother platform economy planned

By CHENG YU
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China's top market regulator unveiled a draft guideline on Sunday to tighten oversight over how e-commerce and online platforms charge merchants, as officials ramp up efforts to promote fairer competition and reduce the operational burden on smaller vendors, which form the backbone of the platform economy.

The State Administration for Market Regulation released a 28-article draft guideline that seeks to standardize the way platforms collect commissions, membership fees, technical service charges, information fees and marketing expenses from merchants.

The proposed document, opened for public feedback on Sunday, said that platforms must adhere to the principles of fairness, legality and good faith when setting fees, and pricing should reflect service agreements, business norms and the operating conditions of merchants.

The regulator encourages plat-

forms to adopt flexible and mutually beneficial pricing models and to offer discounts or fee waivers — especially to small and medium-sized merchants — as part of their corporate social responsibility commitments.

For instance, the draft guideline called on platforms to clearly publicize their fee standards, honor any fee reduction promises, and respect merchants' rights to know and choose services.

Wang Xianlin, a member of the expert advisory group of the State Council's anti-monopoly commission, said, "The guideline is expected to bring greater transparency and structure to the way online trading platforms charge merchants through systematic rulemaking, and will rebalance interests and rebuild a healthy platform ecosystem."

Wang said that the guideline comes at a time when online platforms have become a key engine of economic growth as some problems such as high commission rates and opaque fee structures are arising.

"By regulating fee practices and strengthening platforms' sense of social responsibility, China's platform economy is poised to shift from a phase of rapid scale expansion to one focused on quality and sustainable growth — ultimately creating a win-win environment for merchants, platforms, and consumers alike," he added.

The guideline also bans eight types of unfair practices, including duplicate charging, charging without delivering services and passing on costs that should be borne by the platform itself.

The SAMR also said platforms should proactively respond to merchant concerns, cooperate with inspections and promote industry self-regulation to maintain fair market competition.

Platforms would also be required to set up dedicated compliance teams and internal mechanisms to identify and prevent unreasonable charges. This includes preemptive risk assessments and internal audits of fee structures, the regulator added.

Briefly

Fishery-photovoltaic project aids green push
Chinese power workers are contributing to the country's green push by aiding local feature industries. In the city of Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, a fishery-photovoltaic complementary project is being built in Qiuji town that is designed to generate 38 million kilowatt-hours of power

upon operation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by some 24,840 metric tons per year. State Grid Xuzhou Power Supply Co has sent a team of experts to assist with the project, which is expected to realize an annual output value of 15 million yuan (\$2.09 million). Qiuji is actively developing its village-level economy, constructing distributed PV on the 4,000-square-meter rooftop of

Nizhuang village industrial park, yielding significant benefits.
12:53:13 PM
Yuan strengthens against greenback
The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 86 pips to 7.1833 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade

Argentine beef vies for bigger mkt share

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai
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Argentina's beef industry is intensifying its presence in China, with plans to diversify its product range and cater to growing market demand, according to officials from the Argentine Beef Promotion Institute (IPCVA) at SIAL Shanghai, a premier international food and beverage exhibition.

IPCVA led a delegation of 26 elite meat companies to this year's exhibition, underscoring China's pivotal role in the South American nation's beef export strategy, according to Georges Breitschmitt, president of the IPCVA.

He emphasized their commitment to promoting "the world's finest beef" since their first participation in SIAL in 2011. "Our mission is to promote Argentine beef as a whole," Breitschmitt said. "These 26 companies represent the highest quality beef even globally."

China has emerged as the cornerstone of Argentina's beef export strategy, absorbing around 70 percent of the country's beef exports. "For IPCVA, China represents one of our most significant export markets," Breitschmitt said.

Mario Ravetino, vice-president of the IPCVA, highlighted that Argentina boasts the world's largest Angus cattle population, globally recognized for its superior meat quality.

The entire production process is strictly monitored by Senasa, Argentina's national food health and quality service, ensuring adherence to rigorous health and safety standards.

"High-quality, natural and sustainable are three key words to introduce our beef," Breitschmitt said. "From breeding to slaughter, we implement rigorous health and safety protocols, ensuring product integrity while protecting both consumer health and environmental sustainability."

Recent data underscore Argentina's position as the world's fifth-largest beef exporter. In 2024, the country's global beef exports surpassed 900,000 metric tons, with China importing 595,000 tons, maintaining its status as the primary destination for Argentine beef.

The Argentine pavilion at the SIAL featured an immersive experience with cooking demonstrations by chefs preparing Argentine beef dishes tailored to Chinese palates.

During the exhibition, IPCVA has established a strategic partnership with Chinese e-commerce giant JD to expand Argentine beef's presence in China's digital retail market.

Li Ranxin, general manager of JD's beef and mutton business, revealed that their platform's annual beef sales reached 3 billion yuan (\$415.6 million), with 30 percent year-on-year growth. "As the pioneer in promoting Argentine beef online in China, this partnership will accelerate Chinese consumers' awareness of Argentine beef brands and increase direct sales in China's retail market," Li said.

The industry is now awaiting Chinese regulatory approval to export beef offal products, which have high demand in the Chinese market, according to Ravetino.

Healthy walks



Employees from Pingyao Ancient City Station of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd's Jiexiu Railway Station Division take a walk as part of a group event aimed at relieving stress and encouraging healthy lifestyles so as to offer better service to passengers. WEN JINQI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESS



A Yunxiang executive (center) addresses visitor queries on anti-drone gear during a high-tech expo in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Sky's limit for Yunxiang's anti-drone tech

By CHENG YU
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Tianjin Yunxiang UAV Technology Co Ltd is emerging as a global front-runner in anti-drone technologies, driven by rising security concerns and the country's booming low-altitude economy.

"If drones are the spear, anti-drones are the shield," said Chen Ling, general manager of Yunxiang, in an interview with China Daily. The company, with a strong technological background in anti-drone applications, has been gaining momentum in civil anti-drones with its advanced equipment widely used by major companies like State Grid.

"As unauthorized drone flights become more frequent near sensitive infrastructure, it has become increasingly important for Chinese companies to deploy sophisticated counter-drone systems at speed and scale."

Chen said that China's expanding edge in anti-drone capabilities is underpinned by advances in

radar, electromagnetic interference and artificial intelligence-powered sensor fusion.

"Domestic systems now compete with — and in some cases outpace — foreign counterparts, especially in the detection and disruption of 'low, slow and small' unmanned aerial vehicles," he added.

At the heart of Yunxiang's portfolio is a next-generation portable jammer that fits into a backpack but packs a potent punch. It is able to detect drones by analyzing communication signals between drones and their controllers.

It can jam controls, video transmission and navigation signals, forcing rogue drones to return or land. The system can also emit decoyed navigation data to protect multiple navigation constellations, including the Beidou navigation satellite system, GPS and Galileo.

"This product integrates signal analysis, decryption, directional positioning and multilayer interference in a single platform. Its commercial and defense

applications are expanding rapidly," Chen said.

China's domestic drone sector is already the world's largest. The Civil Aviation Administration of China said that over 608,000 drones were newly registered in the first half of 2024 — a 48 percent increase since the end of 2023 — bringing the total to well over 1.4 million registered units.

The rapid scale-up is fueling demand for countermeasures. China's anti-drone market grew from just 91 million yuan (\$12.5 million) in 2014 to 1.13 billion yuan in 2023, and is projected to exceed 2.4 billion yuan this year. Industry analysts expect Chinese firms to capture a growing share of the global counter-UAV market as exports rise and technology matures.

"Chinese systems are no longer just catching up — they are setting benchmarks, particularly in radar and AI-enabled defense networks," Chen said. China's advancements in swarm defense, urban low-altitude management and integrated

low-cost surveillance networks are also gaining attention overseas.

Notably, Yunxiang has received financial support from Tianjin SME Credit Financing Guarantee Co Ltd (TJCGC), a State-backed financial firm betting on the rise of China's low-altitude economy and its convergence with national security priorities.

"Yunxiang's core technologies, including portable navigation spoofers and satellite timing services, have passed national-level certifications. It's one of only 14 companies in China whose equipment has cleared top-tier government testing," said Yang Dongxiang, chairman of TJCGC.

The company has been included into a TJCGC cultivation project, which exclusively offers small and medium-sized high-tech enterprises with substantial credit guarantees in financing.

"As China upgrades its airspace defense systems and rolls out smart city infrastructure, we believe firms like Yunxiang will better help define the future of urban air safety," Yang said.



Riverside path

Vehicles run on the recently renovated Loujiang Avenue expressway in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. The intercity expressway, which was upgraded last week, serves as a faster conduit between Suzhou and Kunshan, Jiangsu, as it cuts the distance by 40 percent. Built by China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau, the 20.2-kilometer route features China's prefabricated bridge-building solutions, using 688 factory-made segments assembled with AI-guided precision to slash labor needs by 60 percent and reduce construction time by six months.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

McDonald's to accelerate store expansion in China

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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McDonald's Corp said it remains optimistic about its performance in China and plans to accelerate store expansion in the country as part of its international growth push.

The fast-food giant reported a 1 percent decline in global comparable sales in the first quarter of 2025, compared with that of a year ago. Its US comparable sales fell 3.6 percent and international development licensed markets increased 3.5 percent. Executives pointed to China as a bright spot amid a uneven global landscape.

"In China, our performance remained stable, driven by an increase in delivery share, the success of Big Bites, Value meals and strong performance in chicken," said Ian Borden, McDonald's chief financial officer, during the company's

earnings call. "We're encouraged by what we're seeing from our China business."

Chairman and CEO Chris Kempczinski echoed the sentiment in the quarterly earnings release, emphasizing McDonald's enduring brand value in times of economic uncertainty.

China continues to play a central role in McDonald's international strategy. Of the roughly 2,200 new stores the company plans to open globally in 2025, nearly 1,000 are expected to be in China, the company said earlier, according to Yicai, a Shanghai-based business media.

That would account for almost half of its international franchised expansion this year. The company currently operates over 7,000 restaurants in China, with more than half located in third to fifth-tier cities.

Since 2017, McDonald's China has been operated by a consortium led by CITIC Capital. Its highly

localized supply chain has helped insulate the business from external shocks, including the recent trade tension with the US.

"More than 90 percent of our ingredients such as chicken and potatoes are produced, processed and procured within China," said Gu Lei, McDonald's China chief impact officer, in an interview with Yicai.

In response to a nationwide shift toward rational consumption, McDonald's China launched a "Value Year" campaign in 2025, featuring four major initiatives aimed at enhancing perceived value: Big Mac Mix and Match, a membership rewards program and a Gold Card offering.

"Chinese consumers are not just chasing low prices, they're looking for quality and experience at a reasonable price," Gu said, citing findings from a survey of over 40,000 young consumers.

The company also continues to diversify its store formats to cater to local preferences, expanding drive-through locations, smart pickup options, family-friendly restaurants and mobile McCafe carts to increase convenience and customer engagement.

"McDonald's localization strategy has proven highly effective," said Zhu Danpeng, an independent food and beverage industry analyst. "The company has deeply tapped Chinese dietary culture and consumer habits through a localized operating system and product innovation."

"In today's uncertain global economic climate, consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that deliver strong value for money — an area where McDonald's continues to excel. Its sales success reflects a keen understanding of evolving local market dynamics," said Zhu.

Midea ramps up campus recruitment

Home appliance manufacturer pools more talent for innovation, marketing

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese home appliance manufacturer Midea Group will intensify efforts to offer more than 2,000 job positions through campus recruitment this year as part of its broader push to expand employment and scale up support for fresh graduates. The jobs mainly cover eight categories, including research and development, information technology, manufacturing technology, domestic marketing, overseas marketing, finance and banking, supply chain and logistics and management, the company said.

By the end of 2024, it had more than 400 subsidiaries, 38 R&D centers and 44 major manufacturing bases across the globe, with nearly 200,000 employees and operations in more than 200 countries and regions. It has over 35,000 overseas employees and more than 23,000 R&D personnel.

Midea has continuously stepped up recruitment in fields like artificial intelligence, robotics, new energy and healthcare between January and April, with nearly 1,000 people recruited.

Fang Hongbo, chairman and president of Midea Group, highlighted the significance of enterprises' development in stabilizing employment. Currently, Midea has 8,000 core suppliers in China, with the total number of people engaged in the upstream and downstream industrial chains exceeding 1 million.

The company has established partnerships with many universities. Through various forms such as school-enterprise cooperation, internship, and campus recruitment, it provides students with practice opportunities and job positions.

Every year, it offers 2,000 to 3,000 internship positions and recruits over 2,000 fresh graduates, of whom more than 60 percent have obtained master's or doctoral degrees.

Midea also attaches great importance to the cultivation of graduates. It has cultivated a large number of outstanding students through a campus recruitment management system and let them give full play to their abilities. Currently, 50 percent of Midea's senior executives have joined the company through campus recruitment.

It has established a multilevel talent introduction mechanism covering positions from workers and technicians to engineers. In 2025, the number of campus recruitment positions in the company's quality and supply chain system will increase by 30 percent compared with 2024.

Midea will continue to fulfill its corporate responsibility of stabilizing employment and promoting development, with a particular focus on emerging industries such as intelligent manufacturing, digital transformation and new energy. It will further optimize job structures and enhance employment quality to contribute more to the high-quality

development of the manufacturing industry. It (manufacturing) is the main field for absorbing surplus rural labor force in the process of urbanization and serves as an important foundation for nurturing new employment growth points.

Pan Helin, member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy

development of the manufacturing industry.

China has rolled out a comprehensive policy package aimed at expanding employment and supporting business startups amid the country's efforts to foster sufficient and higher-quality employment.

The plan, issued by the leading group on employment work under the State Council in March, aims to boost job opportunities in key sectors and industries.

A key part of the plan is to leverage the role of the manufacturing sector in stabilizing and expanding employment. The country will tap into the employment potential of new quality productive forces in advanced manufacturing to create new jobs with the AI Plus initiative.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said that manufacturing — as an important pillar of China's economic growth — has played a vital role in stabilizing employment and improving the employment structure.

"It is the main field for absorbing surplus rural labor force in the process of urbanization and serves as an important foundation for nurturing new employment growth points," Pan said, adding that the digital transformation and upgrading of manufacturing has created a large number of new positions covering intelligent manufacturing, data analysis and software development.

It is vital to promote jobs in the manufacturing industry and increase incomes of employees, especially frontline workers, as it will effectively help expand the middle-income group, narrow the income gap between urban and rural regions and achieve common prosperity, he added.

Experts also called for more detailed policy measures to step up support for micro, small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises and optimize the business environment to facilitate their high-quality development.



Midea employees work at a refrigerator production facility in Jingzhou, Hubei province, on July 14. LIU SHUSONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESSFOCUS

Autonomous driving firms revved up on biz growth

Global robotaxi market expected to rise from \$400m in 2023 to \$45.7b in 2030

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese autonomous driving companies are ramping up efforts to make forays into overseas markets and expand the number of robotaxi fleets as part of a broader push to bolster the large-scale commercial application of self-driving vehicles and enhance their competitiveness on the global intelligent automotive landscape.

Experts said the accelerated global expansion of cutting-edge technology will create huge opportunities for urban transport systems, with cities around the world adapting regulations to accommodate autonomous vehicles on public thoroughfares.

They added that Chinese self-driving companies boast relatively abundant experience in diversified road-testing and operational scenarios — from high-density urban centers to suburban areas. Meanwhile, ensuring the safety and stability of robotaxis remains a top priority given the complex traffic conditions and urban environments in different countries.

Data from research firm MarketsandMarkets showed the scale of the global robotaxi market is expected to rise from \$400 million in 2023 to \$45.7 billion in 2030, at a compound annual growth rate of 91.8 percent during the period.

The consultancy said the growth of the robotaxi market is influenced by rising demand for ride-hailing services, high research and development investment, and government focus on reducing emissions, boosting infrastructure development and spurring the electrification of vehicles.

Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Chinese tech heavyweight Baidu Inc, said 2025 will be a pivotal year for the growth of its autonomous ride-hailing platform Apollo Go, with plans to expand fleet size and ride volume faster than ever.

Apollo Go has provided more than 11 million rides to the public. Altogether, the service has deployed over 1,000 fully driverless vehicles globally and has expanded its presence to 15 cities.

"Looking ahead, we will deepen our presence in existing markets while strategically entering new ones, capturing broader growth opportunities worldwide," Li said, adding that he sees a clear path to

profitability for Apollo Go as costs in hardware and other areas decrease and the growing operational scale results in more efficiency.

The company has stepped up its global expansion pace. It has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Roads and Transport Authority of Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, to launch autonomous driving testing and services in the city.

The move marks Apollo Go's first international fleet deployment outside the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong and its first entry into the Middle East. It will deploy 100 fully autonomous vehicles in Dubai by the end of this year, using its sixth-generation robotaxi, with plans to expand the fleet to no fewer than 1,000 by 2028.

All tests and services will be conducted in line with Dubai's local laws and adapted to regional needs. The collaboration aims to integrate autonomous ride-hailing into Dubai's broader transportation ecosystem, offering enhanced mobility services for residents and contributing to the city's intelligent infrastructure goals.

Moreover, it has inked a strategic partnership with Autogo, a UAE-based autonomous mobility solutions company, with the goal of deploying the largest fully driverless fleet in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE.

Initial trials of dozens of Apollo Go autonomous vehicles will be deployed in select areas of Abu Dhabi, with phased expansion planned ahead of full commercial operations by 2026.

Earlier this month, Apollo Go expanded testing in Hong Kong after completing over 14,000 kilometers of testing and being granted an updated pilot license by the Transport Department of Hong Kong. With the new license, it is able to conduct trials across expanded routes.

It received permits to test autonomous vehicles in Hong Kong in December 2024, marking its first entry into a right-hand drive market and an important milestone in its journey toward globalization.

With the expanded testing, the number of its vehicles operating in each test has been increased to 10, and the testing area will include dozens of roads. Looking ahead, the company said it anticipates an orderly rollout of autonomous vehicles in Hong Kong, ensuring

and accumulated over 45,000 kilometers of autonomous driving mileage on this route. A TEU is a widely used unit of measurement in the shipping business.

Its autonomous truck operations have evolved from early-stage road testing to commercial operations with autonomous platoons. The company said it will focus on achieving fully driverless fleets to drive the mass commercialization of autonomous trucks.

By the end of 2024, Pony.ai's autonomous trucks had accumulated more than 5 million km of road testing mileage, and serviced more than 860 million freight ton-kilometers.

Jiang Zheng, an expert at the research and development center affiliated with GAC Group, said compared with self-driving passenger-carrying robotaxis, the routes of autonomous trucks are more fixed, and there are no traffic lights or passengers once they get on expressways, thus providing more ideal conditions for the large-scale commercialization of autonomous driving technology.



Top: An autonomous Robo Minibus jointly developed by Renault and WeRide undergoes a test in Barcelona, Spain, on Feb 14.

JOSEF LAGO / AFP

Above: The interior view of Baidu's Apollo Go driverless car in Wuhan, Hubei province, on April 12. JI PENGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

safety as a top priority.

"Chinese self-driving enterprises have strong technical prowess and accumulated rich testing and operational experience in the domestic market. They aspire to play a bigger role in the international autonomous vehicle field by leveraging their strengths," said Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy.

There is a surging demand for autonomous vehicles in overseas markets, while the open environment and supportive measures for autonomous driving technology in some countries, such as the UAE and Luxembourg, provide these companies with ideal testing sites and broader development space, Zhu said.

Their global expansion will bolster the maturity of autonomous driving technology, propel the in-depth integration of global industrial chains, optimize resource allocation and inject fresh impetus into the self-driving sector across the globe, he added.

Chinese self-driving company Pony.ai announced earlier this month that it has inked a strategic partnership with US-based ride-

hailing service provider Uber to deploy its robotaxis onto the latter's platform.

The partnership is expected to be first rolled out in a key market in the Middle East later this year, with a goal of scaling deployments to additional international markets in the future, said Pony.ai. During the initial pilot phase, these vehicles will have a safety operator onboard until the companies' fully autonomous commercial launch.

This is a key step in Pony.ai's global expansion strategy, the company said, highlighting that its seventh-generation autonomous driving system facilitates the mass production of robotaxis on a more scalable and cost-effective basis.

This technological advancement aligns with the strategic goals of the partnership, empowering Uber's platform to more quickly and safely integrate autonomous vehicles as the collaboration expands to new markets.

Pony.ai has accelerated steps to expand its presence in overseas markets. It has established an R&D center in Luxembourg, with a key focus on accelerating autonomous driving innovation and integrating

self-driving technologies into the country's next-generation transportation, while offering customized solutions for the European market.

It has obtained a scientific testing permit for Level 4 autonomous driving from authorities in Luxembourg. This authorization expands Pony.ai's global testing portfolio, building on existing permits in China, the United States and South Korea.

Level 4 vehicles can intervene if there is a system failure and do not require human assistance in most circumstances. However, a manual override option is still available.

Under the newly granted permits, Pony.ai will commence on-road testing in collaboration with Emile Weber, Luxembourg's premier mobility solutions provider. The collaboration leverages Emile Weber's expertise in delivering integrated mobility solutions across public transit, private transportation and tourism sectors.

The company has also set up a joint venture in South Korea in collaboration with a local tech company to promote the development and application of self-driving technology. The two sides plan to deploy an autonomous driving vehicle fleet in Seoul to provide ride-hailing services to the public.

"China is at the global forefront of R&D and the application of self-driving technology, while the accelerated expansion of Chinese self-driving companies in overseas markets will be conducive to propelling the large-scale commercialization of the cutting-edge technology globally," said Zhang Xiang, a visiting professor at the engineering department of Huanghe Science and Technology University.

Zhang said authorities in the Middle East and some European countries have a relatively open attitude toward autonomous driving vehicles and are promoting the testing and use of robotaxis thanks to technological advancements and cost reductions provided by robotaxis when compared to conventional taxi services.

Zhang emphasized that due to the differences in road conditions, laws and regulations in various countries, enterprises need to conduct more road tests based on diverse scenarios, and learn about local traffic rules and consumer habits, adding there will be differentiated requirements in terms of privacy protection and data management, and compliance in overseas markets.

Self-driving startup WeRide recently announced the launch of fully driverless robotaxi trial operations in Abu Dhabi, the first deployment of its kind in the Middle East. Starting this quarter, a fleet of its robotaxis will be piloted on public roads without a safety driver, marking a major milestone in the advancement of smart mobility in the city.

The company is accelerating its global business expansion, with the UAE as a key market for autonomous driving growth and innovation. In July 2023, the company received the UAE's first and only national license for self-driving vehicles, authorizing testing and operation of its autonomous vehicles on public roads nationwide.

In December 2024, WeRide and Uber launched their ride-hailing partnership in Abu Dhabi, marking the largest commercial robotaxi service outside the US and China.

"Chinese self-driving companies expanding presence abroad may encounter some challenges, such as differences in culture, laws and regulations. Meanwhile, competition in overseas markets is fierce. They need to constantly enhance their technological strength in order to gain a firm foothold on the international stage," said Li Xinbo, an automotive industry analyst at China Auto Information Technology (Tianjin) Co Ltd.

Moreover, as the operating costs and compliance risks in overseas markets are relatively high, these enterprises need to carefully assess and formulate strategic plans, speed up localization efforts and launch services that cater to local requirements when carrying forward their globalization push, Li said.

Driverless trucks show way of future transport

By FAN FEIFEI

The commercial use of autonomous trucks is gaining momentum in the logistics sector as Chinese self-driving firms accelerate steps to conduct road tests and mass-produce autonomous heavy-duty trucks driven by rising demand for faster freight delivery.

China's autonomous driving company Pony.ai announced that it has been granted permission to carry out cross-provincial expressway testing of unmanned truck platoons, the first such testing in China.

The platoons, led by manned vehicles, have begun self-driving freight-service testing on the Beijing-Tianjin-Tanggu expressway. As part of its strategic roadmap, Pony.ai aims to achieve full autonomy for trucks in future platoons, further driving down logistics costs for autonomous trucking.

Pony.ai's autonomous trucks, which transport goods daily between Beijing and Tianjin, have delivered nearly 500 twenty-foot equivalent units of freight orders

for its heavy-duty autonomous trucks on open roads.

It has successfully completed the world's first demonstration operation on the Suzhou-Taizhou expressway S17, demonstrating the safety and reliability of its autonomous heavy-duty truck technology on actual road conditions.

Rong Li, CEO of Zhijia Technology, said the company hopes to help reduce delivery costs, make long-haul logistics safer and address the shortage of truck drivers.

The company has delivered its intelligent heavy-duty truck K7+, equipped with advanced autonomous driving systems, to a batch of domestic logistics and delivery companies through collaboration with Chinese automaker JAC Group.

Moreover, it has finished the industry's first warehouse-to-warehouse unmanned trucking test. The test route began at a major e-commerce logistics park in Huangshi, Hubei province, passing through urban areas and multilane highways, and concluded at a large storage center within a freight airport.

"Logistics companies see rising demand for autonomous trucks, which can help improve transportation efficiency, lower the costs of labor and delivery, and liberate people from repetitive and low-value physical labor," said Jiang, adding that he is bullish on autonomous truck prospects.

According to a report by Beijing-based think tank EqualOcean, the number of heavy-duty trucks in China's logistics system is expected to reach 6.27 million in 2030, with revenue from autonomous trucks hitting 853.9 billion yuan (\$118.3 billion) by then.

Global consultancy McKinsey & Company expects the global autonomous heavy-duty trucking market to reach \$616 billion by 2035, with China, the United States and Europe contributing \$327 billion, \$178 billion and \$112 billion, respectively.

Chinese autonomous trucking startup Zhijia Technology is speeding up the testing and deployment of its autonomous driving technology. The company has obtained the nation's first license to conduct tests

for its heavy-duty autonomous trucks on open roads.

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Visitors experience the intelligent driving of two heavy-duty trucks in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in June. YANG LEI / XINHUA

Autonomous trucks are mainly tested or applied in relatively simple scenarios, such as expressways, ports, mines and some closed parks, and equipped with advanced sensors, radars and camera systems, said Zhang Xiang, a visiting professor at the engineering department of Huanghe Science and Technology University.

Zhang said the application of self-driving heavy-duty trucks in the

logistics sector will elevate transportation safety, shorten the delivery time of goods, and lower the operating costs of logistics companies.

However, there are still some difficulties and challenges in promoting the large-scale commercial use of self-driving trucks, as it is difficult for authorities to manage long-haul trucks, whose operational range covers several provinces, he added.

COMMENT

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China's cultural renaissance a path to national prosperity and global influence

Alongside economic, political, social, and eco-environmental progress, culture stands as a foundational pillar of China's coordinated development plan.

The nation's cultural confidence, combined with faith in its development path, theory and system, underscores a deep-rooted commitment to foster a robust cultural-ethical framework in tandem with material advancement.

The strategic significance that China accords to its cultural development reverberates through its policymaking, with decision-makers recognizing its pivotal role in underpinning social stability and national security. Culture serves as a catalyst for nurturing the national spirit, preserving a historical sense of identity, and propelling economic, social and personal development on a well-rounded trajectory.

The convening of the Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength 2025 in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Monday was a testament to China's unwavering dedication to enhancing its cultural prowess.

This platform, uniting academia, business and policy circles, serves as a crucible for galvanizing collective wisdom to advance the nation's cultural landscape.

Delving into critical issues surrounding the high-quality development of the cultural industry in China's modernization journey, the forum engendered a shared vision on leveraging new technologies, invigorating the cultural market, harnessing the nation's cultural reservoirs, and fostering global cultural exchanges. Proposals on policy frameworks and operational strategies emerged as guiding beacons for navigating this transformative terrain.

The burgeoning cultural industry in China not only provides a fertile ground for discourse on enhancing innovation, diversity, and public engagement, but also fortifies the bedrock of national cultural confidence.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, has spearheaded a cultural renaissance, elevating public communication, arts, journalism and phi-

losophy to the forefront of national discourse.

Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, China has set its sight on becoming a cultural powerhouse by 2035, anchoring itself in the rich tapestry of Chinese civilization while embracing the digital age. Upholding Marxism as the guiding principle, fostering socialist culture, and championing core socialist values are instrumental in shaping a cultural ethos that resonates both domestically and globally.

The imperative to bolster governance capacity in the cultural domain under informationized conditions, uphold the Party's leadership, and deepen reforms underscores China's unwavering commitment to cultural-ethical advancement. The annual forum, a beacon of cultural innovation and prosperity, embodies the collective resolve to propel China's cultural narrative onto the global stage.

Beyond the symposiums and policy pronouncements, China's cultural metamorphosis is palpable in the reformation of governmental departments, aimed at enhancing responsiveness and efficacy in steering cultural industry policies and bolstering public services. The vibrancy of the cultural industry, a key driver of economic growth, exemplifies the nation's holistic approach to meeting social aspirations.

As the nation charts a course toward deeper reform, innovation, and public engagement, the imperative to forge a collaborative mechanism for sustained cultural-ethical development looms large. The clarion call for enriching cultural lives, nurturing personal development, and fortifying core socialist values underscores a steadfast commitment to fostering harmonious and cohesive national ethos.

To ignite a cultural renaissance that resonates across diverse strata of society, China must champion academic democracy, artistic expression, and international exchanges to invigorate its soft power and global appeal.

By harnessing the transformative potential of cultural heritage, creative enterprises, and cross-cultural dialogue, China can expand its cultural footprint on the world stage and draw inspiration from the collective wisdom of civilizations past and present.

Alireza Pakdel



Opinion Line

Bandung Spirit cherished as guide for neighbors' friendly relations

Premier Li Qiang's three-day visit to Indonesia that started on Saturday has fulfilled its objective of elevating political mutual trust and strategic coordination between the two countries to a higher level.

Apart from Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Speaker of Indonesia's House of Representatives Puan Maharani and other senior Indonesian officials, Li also met with representatives of the country's business community.

Li took advantage of these meetings to express China's commitment to maintaining regional peace and stability, promoting regional common development and sustaining the stability of regional industry and supply chains, and introducing China's opening-up policy, high-quality development strategy and development strengths in relevant industries.

Facing risks and challenges, China has intensified counter-cyclical macro policy adjustments, and implemented a more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy, Li said.

It is expected that through the face-to-face communications with the Chinese premier and the ministers in his delegation, his Indonesian hosts can be better aware of the strategic importance China attaches to Sino-Indonesian relations, and its sincerity to further strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries and promote the China-Indonesia community with a shared future.

As Li said, the Chinese side stands ready to consolidate cooperation in

the "five pillars" of politics, economy, people-to-people and cultural exchange, maritime affairs and security, jointly address risks and challenges, and better promote common development.

China has always taken Indonesia as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy. China is willing to work with Indonesia to enhance the alignment of development strategies, and deepen high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, especially by optimizing and strengthening landmark projects.

To that end, as Li urged, the two sides should enhance market connectivity and industrial collaboration, improve the level of trade and investment facilitation, and expand cooperation in areas such as finance, new energy, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, aerospace and the ocean.

The Chinese side is willing to work with Indonesia to strengthen exchanges between their legislative bodies and inter-party cooperation, and enhance policy communication and the sharing of governance experiences.

The two sides should ensure the implementation of landmark and important projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, facilitate two-way trade and investment, and jointly create a fair and favorable business environment.

They also need to expand cooperation in emerging fields such as the digital economy, green development and artificial intelligence, enabling higher-level mutual benefit and win-win outcomes, Li noted.

While expanding their common

interest through pragmatic economic and trade cooperation, the two countries should expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges, deepen cooperation in areas related to people's livelihood such as food and agriculture, poverty reduction and health, and bring more benefits to the two peoples.

The cooperation and communication can help synergize their efforts to not only pursue common development but also respond to the rising uncertainties and risks in the external development environment.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Bandung Conference. Over the past 70 years, the Bandung Spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation has provided guidance for the independent and self-reliant development of Asian and African countries.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations 75 years ago, the two countries have supported each other and stood by each other, and their traditional friendship has remained firm and ever-relevant. That historical legacy and the robust momentum of the healthy development of bilateral ties in recent years should be cherished.

China and Indonesia should further carry forward the Bandung Spirit, strengthen solidarity and coordination, promote the practice of true multilateralism, and work together to address challenges, so as to boost and share prosperity. Solidarity and cooperation remain the only viable path forward to confront the risks and challenges that lie ahead.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

US reversing world's climate endeavor

The House of Representatives of the United States passed a bill last week, which advanced a sweeping spending package that would roll back Biden-era tax credits for renewable energy projects. They include an early phasing out of a tax break for clean energy vehicles, moving up the timeline to end tax credits for new renewable energy power plants as well as requiring them to begin construction within 60 days of the enactment of the legislation and be in service by the end of 2028.

At the same time, the US Environmental Protection Agency announced on Saturday that it is working on a proposal to remove all existing restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions from coal- and gas-fired power plants in the country.

The EPA was reported as arguing in its proposed regulation that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from power plants that burn fossil fuels "do not contribute significantly to dangerous pollution" or to climate change because they are a small and declining share of global emissions.

It should be no surprise for the world what the Donald Trump administration will do on climate change since he signed an executive order for the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on his first day in the White House on Jan 20, as he did during his first term.

"It is the policy of my administration to put the interests of the United States and the American people first in the development and negotiation of any international agreements with the potential to damage or stifle the American economy," said Trump's day-one executive order on global environmental deals.

As part of Trump's first day orders, the US also halted all financial contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, leaving the UN climate body with a 22 percent shortfall in its core budget. In 2024, US contributions totaled \$13.3 million.

Washington has not only turned a blind eye to the international obligations it has because of the huge amount of CO2 it has contributed during its industrial development, it has now also started to encourage the use of coal and gas in generating electricity by scrapping the limits on gas emis-

sions from such plants.

Furthermore, it is trying to make things hard for renewable energy power plants, and even starts to add annual federal registration fees for EV and hybrid car owners. The fee will be \$250 for electric vehicles and \$100 for hybrids.

As one of the largest contributors of green house gas emissions and definitely the largest on a per capita basis, the US' withdrawal of its financial aid to emissions cutting projects will greatly compromise global climate actions. What the US government has done to roll back clean energy projects and encourage the use of fossil fuel in power generation represents a huge disservice to what the world has achieved in its fight against climate change.

"Interest of the US and American people first" has become a pretext for the Trump administration to shirk its due international responsibility as the world's sole superpower. With "make America great again" as the guide for its policymaking, Trump's US has become an irresponsible superpower without a smattering of vision about the future of humanity.

Without making its due contribution to the global fight against climate change and to global endeavors to address other common challenges facing humanity, how can the Trump administration put the interests of the US and American people first?

The extreme climate conditions caused by climate change such as droughts and flooding will not exempt American people from their devastation, nor will environmental pollution.

To address common challenges such as climate change and ecological destruction, joint endeavors of all countries are important. This is common sense.

That explains why China has proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. China has also proposed the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, which is meant to mobilize global resources for addressing common challenges in order to make human development sustainable.

To the grief of the world, the US is reversing global endeavors against the common challenges facing humanity.

What They Say

Show must go on, even amid tariffs and tensions

"The show must go on" may sound like a theatrical cliché, but in the tense arena of US-China relations it has become a quiet and resilient act of diplomacy.

While trade tensions simmer and policy dialogue stutters, artists, curators, educators, and cultural institutions are building fragile but essential bridges between the world's two largest economies. Their work may not make headlines, but it remains indispensable.

In a conversation hosted recently by the National Committee on US-China Relations, Alison Friedman, executive and artistic director of Carolina Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a veteran of two decades of cultural exchanges with China, offered a rare window into this quieter side of bilateral relations.

"The arts," she said, "are the good news, even when there's a tremendous amount of bad news, especially domestically for the arts." Even as political sensitivities escalate and funding for cultural institutions recedes, institutions are "continuing to do things," Friedman said, "just doing them more quietly."

It's a return, she noted, to how her own company operated in China years ago: securing permits, planning events, but staying under the

radar until after the curtain fell.

"That's exactly what we're seeing here in the US now with projects with China," she said, a situation in which the pressure to go silent increasingly originates from Washington. Friedman described the current moment as "a time of much quieter foundation-laying," so that, when the political climate eventually shifts, cultural engagement can expand without having to be "starting from scratch."

Consider the March opening of *Recasting the Past: The Art of Chinese Bronzes, 1100-1900* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a project years in the making with the Shanghai Museum. At a gala co-hosted by the Chinese embassy and the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center earlier this month, Ambassador Xie Feng emphasized that "people-to-people friendship lays the foundation for enduring relations and peace between nations", and that "it matters even more at difficult times."

On May 5 in Boston, Chinese Consul General Chen Li attended the opening of *Qi Baishi: Inspiration in Ink*, a joint exhibition by the Beijing Academy of Painting and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He called it not only an artistic collaboration but a "cultural bridge."

Friedman sees hope in younger gen-

erations still willing to cross borders, often literally. She shared the story of a student at NYU Shanghai who, struggling in Chinese class, decided to bike from Shanghai to Xi'an, learning the language by talking with fruit sellers along the way. These "transformative" and "contextual" experiences shape long-term perspectives and relationships, she said.

Friedman highlighted the growing difficulty of securing visas for foreign artists — O and P artist visas can now cost thousands of dollars, with premium processing often required just to meet performance deadlines. The high costs are deterring participation in major festivals.

At the NCUSCR discussion, Jessica Chen Weiss, a China scholar at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, described navigating reviews at the university's exports control office for a planned research trip to China. "I worry that we are very much going to be cutting off our ability to understand what is even happening in China," Weiss said.

For all the gloom surrounding US-China ties, the quiet work of cultural diplomacy offers a modest but meaningful source of optimism. The show must go on — not for the sake of appearances, but for the hope that it plants.

— ZHAO HUANXIN, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Prakoso Bharata Puitara

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Health reform and its relevance for Indonesia

China has implemented large-scale health reforms over the past few decades to make healthcare accessible and affordable to all, and improve its quality and economic efficiency. The 2009 health reform program was a turning point as it widened the health insurance plan, integrated formerly disjointed services and included significant health infrastructure investments. Today, basic health insurance covers more than 95 percent of the Chinese people, significantly reducing out-of-pocket payments and health inequality.

These reforms are more than technical accomplishments; they have a political nature. The Chinese government has been consistently implementing health reforms within the overall context of the country's supreme development targets, which include economic modernization and social fairness. The "Healthy China 2030" plan represents a shift to an active system, which focuses on prevention, health promotion, and chronic condition management, contrary to the old reactive, treatment-based system. This incorporation makes it clear health is not a secondary issue but placed firmly at the center of national development.

China is also committed to protecting environmental health. Considering the risks posed by rapid industrialization, the country has implemented strict environmental policies, including the Environmental Protection Law, and launched campaigns to reduce air and water pollution. For example, the Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan has significantly reduced PM2.5 levels in cities such as Beijing. Despite the gaps in implementation, especially in rural areas, these efforts reflect the government's active and integrated commitment to public health.

Challenges, however, remain. Inconsistencies in policy implementation at the local level often result from differences in governance, because occasionally economic interests related to environmental and health issues prevail.

Today, Indonesia is at a crossroads in developing its health system. The Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional program has made significant strides toward universality but still faces challenges like healthcare fragmentation, uneven quality and underinvestment for disease prevention and control. To break down institutional silos and bring about integration, strong government political commitment is needed.

China's experience cannot be attributed to a single policy but to the balanced interaction between insurance reform and overall national development plans, including the government's focus on community-level health infrastructure. Village doctors and grassroots clinics are an integral part of the healthcare



For Indonesia, integrating health interests into its digitalized transformation and foreign policy can help make it a regional front-runner for health innovation and resilience.

system in China. Early diagnosis and ongoing care by the local clinics are important determinants for an equitable and vibrant healthcare system. In Indonesia, developing operational capacity for local health centers could reap transformative benefits, specifically in economically under-

privileged areas like eastern Indonesia.

Health diplomacy can be an important part of Indonesia's international identity, particularly as the country strives to bring the rewards and increased expectations tied to its "Golden Indonesia 2045" aspirations to fruition. The development of an inclusive, equitable and connected health system requires not only resources but also strategic direction, cross-ministerial coordination and governmental resolve.

As part of Indonesia's research and innovation environment, this circumstance requires greater coordination among ministries, more research and development for health, and a commitment to policymaking based on long-term rewards over short-term returns.

Indonesia's incorporation of technology and diplomacy into its health governance system further supports this claim. The use of artificial intelligence for health surveillance, coupled with the

Digital Silk Road program, shows how public health can be harnessed to promote greater strategic interests. For Indonesia, integrating health interests into its digitalized transformation and foreign policy can help make it a regional front-runner for health innovation and resilience.

In addition, the Chinese experience highlights the role of leadership in unifying fractured institutions and sustaining the momentum for change. Whether the issue is tobacco control or pandemic control, the Chinese leadership's ability to inspire the people into action demonstrates the importance of coordinated and effective governance. As Indonesia moves toward its independence centenary in 2045, it is crucial that it reforms its healthcare system in a way that changes its nature from a policy aspiration to a national mission.

The author is head of the Bureau for Planning and Finance and a senior researcher at the National Research and Innovation Agency in Indonesia.

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



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Nii Quaye-Kumah

Investment in rural youth propels rural vitalization

Nearly 500 million people in China live in rural areas, with the agricultural workforce accounting for 25 percent of the total labor force in the country. But for many rural workers, the road to economic empowerment remains difficult, hindered by poor infrastructure and limited connectivity with larger markets.

Vitalizing the rural economy is a priority, including investing in local talents, for the government. In fact, China's No. 1 central document for 2025 emphasizes the importance of cultivating home-grown expertise by, among other things, training farmers, supporting rural artisans, and building a strong pool of skilled and practical professionals to drive rural areas' development.

Therefore, the IFAD has been partnering with the government to channel resources, training and investment on talented youths in rural areas.

I've had the privilege of interacting with two women who are bringing this vision to life through IFAD-supported projects. Both are university graduates who chose to return to their rural hometowns in Yunnan and Hunan provinces, respectively. With deep roots in their communities and a commitment to inclusive growth, they have transformed traditional industries — chili processing and tea production — into thriving enterprises.

Their brands have gained national reputation and, more importantly, their endeavors have created jobs and helped increase local people's income, bringing hope to rural families. The two are powerful examples of how young people's leadership, matched with targeted support, can drive rural



The journeys of Liu and Chen show that investment in the rural youth can transform rural areas and improve rural people's livelihoods.

vitalization from the ground up.

In April, I visited the IFAD's project in the mountainous province of Yunnan. Amid the flourishing pepper plantations, I met Liu Yonghong, founder of Zhaotong Sinong Food Technology Co Ltd.

Knowing the value of her hometown's high-quality chilis, Liu gave up her job in the catering industry in Kunming, Yunnan province, and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, to return to Zhaotong in Yunnan seven years ago to start a chili processing business. She built nationally recognized brands, producing chili sauce and oil and supplying to restaurant chains such as Haidilao with key ingredients. Under her leadership, the Zhaotong Sinong Food Technology Co mobilized and supported more than 15,000 farmers to grow chilis on 50,000 mu (3,333.33 hectares), helping rural households increase their income and gain long-term market access.

But Liu's vision is fueled with considerations beyond business; it is based on a mantra she lives by: "We build the present and shape the future." She said, "Personal wealth alone means little... What truly makes me proud is helping more people to live better lives and bringing our hometown's industry out of the mountains."

To support her local community, she arranged shuttle buses for the company's elder female workers to commute from remote areas, and set up a Women's Entrepreneurship Training Base with the Zhaotong Women's Federation. Among the 630 women who have received training, 52 have started small businesses of their own, creating more than 400 new jobs.

As the demand for her products grew, Liu faced new operational constraints. When her original factory could no longer handle both finished and semi-finished production, she decided to build a new facility specializing in high-value deep-processed chili products.

To support the expansion, the IFAD's Yunnan Rural Revitalization Demonstration Project provided 4.99 million yuan (about \$690,000) for the construction of a pickled vegetable processing line as well as the purchase of equipment. This will ensure the company keeps growing without leaving rural entrepreneurs and workers behind.

The other woman, Chen Xiaojuan, has transformed a lifelong passion into thriving business, improving the livelihoods of people around her in the tea-covered hills of Guzhang county, Hunan province. Eight years ago, she started the Yizhangqing Tea Cooperative — which manages more than 300 mu of tea plan-

tations, nearly a quarter of which is certified as organic. Her endeavors have helped lift more than 300 smallholders working in the cooperative out of poverty. The company's premium teas have even made it to the highly valued Shenzhen Spring Tea Expo.

Chen shared not only her story but also the cooperative's finest organic tea with me. She said that by 2023, the rising yield, particularly of organic tea, had started outpacing the cooperative's processing capacity. To bridge this gap, she secured a 300,000 yuan support loan from the IFAD-funded Hunan Rural Revitalization Demonstration Project.

Chen used the amount to expand the processing facility and enhance production efficiency. She also initiated training programs to boost the technical capacity of local growers, training 64 farmers in high-yield organic cultivation techniques, and equipping them with the skills needed to adopt more sustainable and modern agricultural practices.

The journeys of Liu and Chen show that investment in the rural youth can transform rural areas and improve rural people's livelihoods. They also show how the IFAD's resources can catalyze development finance to drive change.

Let us remember not only the dignity of work, but also the leadership and dedication of those who perform that work.

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



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Universities right to reduce foreign language seats, start new majors

More than 100 Chinese universities have either closed their foreign language colleges or merged them with other colleges in the past five years or so, mainly because the number of bachelor degrees awarded to foreign language majors every year has been declining at a rapid pace.

Foreign language teaching started in China more than 150 years ago, with English, French and Japanese being the first languages to be taught in the foreign concession schools in Shanghai and Tianjin. After the Japanese invaded northeast China in 1931, students in the occupied areas were compelled to learn Japanese, an experience more miserable than that described by Alphonse Daudet in *The Last Lesson*.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when China was on good terms with the Soviet Union, Russian was the most popular subject to be taught in foreign language colleges. Only after China launched reform and opening-up in the late 1970s did it realize the shortage of Chinese people who could read, write and speak English, French, German, Japanese and some other foreign languages.

For nearly three decades after that, mastering a foreign language became key to getting a good job with decent pay. When I graduated from a language school in 1977 with English as my major, the demand for English teachers for middle schools was so high that my classmates who failed to clear the college entrance examination were all recruited by local education authorities as middle-school teachers.

There was such a shortage of foreign language teachers that after graduating from the English department of a university, six of my 17 classmates were directly recruited by my university to teach English there. While leaving to join China Daily, I heard that the six youths who were yet to get their bachelor's degree, were preparing to teach English to the freshmen. This may sound unbelievable today, but it was the reality in the 1980s.

When such a huge number of graduates compete for limited number of teaching and translating job vacancies, a good job, let alone good pay, becomes difficult to get.

Earning a major in one foreign language or more foreign languages was popular among students until about a decade ago, when reportedly about 400 million Chinese children and youths were learning a foreign language with English being by far the most popular — followed by Japanese and Korean. Also, about a decade and a half ago, more than 300,000 students were studying one of the 60 foreign languages taught in China as a major.

When such a huge number of graduates compete for limited number of teaching and translating job vacancies, a good job, let alone good pay, becomes difficult to get.

As a journalist, who majored in English literature and has seen the ups and downs of foreign language teaching over the past five decades, should I feel sad about the closing of foreign language colleges? For me, the development is not the result of foreign languages losing their popularity but a proof that the Chinese people now have a better grasp of foreign languages.

Till a few years ago, most Chinese people, including officials, scholars and businessmen, had to depend on interpreters and translators to communicate with their foreign counterparts. Today, most Chinese people with a higher education degree have studied English or another foreign language for 12 to 16 years and thus can read, write and speak in that language. This is to say they can converse in English or the foreign language they chose to study.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technology has helped the development of apps that can translate. Although we sometimes laugh at new technologies for their "silly" translations, we know that AI's intrusion into the realm of translation is something unavoidable.

Like it or not, in no time a big part of language translation and interpretation work will be done by AI and bilingual or even trilingual talents may soon find themselves struggling to find a well-paying job. I think the universities are making the right decision by reducing the number of seats in foreign language departments while starting new majors that combine foreign languages with law, trade, arts and other emerging subjects.

GLOBAL VIEWS

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Renewal or decline

The United Nations needs to be remodeled so that it is the hub for global governance

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the birth of the United Nations as well as the end of World War II. It is largely thanks to the UN that World War III has been averted so far. But the future of the UN hangs in the balance. Humanity stands at an inflection point of peace or peril. Which path humanity will take depends on the action, or lack of it, taken by humanity as a whole.

A perfect storm of existential threats against the whole of humanity is coming from three directions: the resumed specter of a nuclear winter; the rapidly intensifying climate disaster; and the unknown risks from the loss of human control of emerging technologies. The existential threat is worsening on all three fronts. But the efficacy of the global response to these challenges is declining due to the growing glitches in the global governance system. Major power rivalry is back, since the short-lived honeymoon of the post-Cold War period was over at the beginning of the 21st century. As a result, global consensus is retreating and the global leadership deficit is growing. The pace of technological development is moving at seemingly light speed, while the normative effort to contain the negative consequences is moving like a snail.

Multilateralism, the main institutional vehicle to drive the norms, is under severe stress. The most visible symptom is the paralysis of the UN Security Council in the face of the regional conflicts in Europe and the Middle East which seriously threaten the international peace and security. Global leadership is in short supply. The deficit in the provision of global public goods is rapidly growing. On the one hand, the demand for global public goods is rising exponentially, while their supply is shrinking on the other hand. One prime example is humanitarian assistance. The number of refugees and internally displaced people around the world has increased nearly five times since 2007, from 25 million to over 120 million.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Unfortunately, the number continues to go upward, as most of the ongoing conflicts show signs of not abating, but aggravating. The gap between the need for humanitarian assistance and the supply of necessary resources is rising due to donor fatigue and the retreat of global leadership. The current administration of the United States is likely

to add fuel to this problem.

In the face of these global crises, the performance of the UN is both disappointing and troubling. It's disappointing as it is seen as ineffective in mitigating global risks. It's troubling as humanity does not have any better recourse. The stark reality is that humanity cannot afford to get rid of

the UN which has assumed the position of the largest global service provider. This is not an outcome by intention but by default. The founding fathers of the UN may have not dreamed of such a function falling on the shoulders of the UN system. The enormity and scale of global service provision has already surpassed the capacity of the

UN to provide, and the provision gap is bound to grow. Regardless of whether one is disappointed with the UN or not, undeniable is the fact that without the UN, no country or organization, no matter however powerful or resourceful, would be able to perform this function.

The way forward is clear. The UN has to go on. But the UN must get better. It is incumbent on all members of the UN to renew its purpose fit for the demands of the 21st century and enhance its efficiency in the digital world and in the age of artificial intelligence. This will be an uphill task amid the declining global leadership and weakening global consensus. But it is not impossible, either, if we can mobilize the will of the whole of humanity.

This requires a global public-private partnership. The role of governments is crucial as the driver of this process. But governments cannot do the job alone given the urgency and seriousness of the tasks ahead. They need help from academia, civil society and businesses. In the age of globalization, the catchphrase was "thinking globally and acting locally". This is no longer sufficient at a time of ever-worsening global existential threats including, in particular, climate and other sustainability crisis. Solutions must be planetary. Global peace among humanity is not sufficient. Planetary peace with nature needs to be incorporated and prioritized across national borders. Then the new catch phrase should be "acting planetarily while still thinking locally". In view of the complexity of challenges, multilayered multilateralism needs to be facilitated through a diverse ecosystem of institutions, networks and processes. The UN must be renewed as the hub for planetary governance. Humanity does not have any better option for the next 80 years.

The author is the former under-secretary-general of the United Nations. 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.

HODAN OSMAN ABDI

The weight of ambition

Somalia is reclaiming its place among the community of nations with purpose and determination

Two decades ago, I arrived in Beijing as a wide-eyed student from Somalia, drawn by curiosity and the promise of learning in a land often portrayed as distant and enigmatic. What I found instead was a world that would reshape my understanding of resilience, governance and the mechanics of development. I could never have imagined then that my personal journey would intertwine so deeply with China's evolution, or that I would one day return — not as a student, but as Somalia's ambassador, walking through the same doors where my journey once began.

Today, when I'm asked what two lessons from China I believe hold the most value for Africa, my answer is unwavering: governance and modernization. These are not abstract ideas to me — they are lived experiences, studied closely through the lens of time and tested through engagement. I offer this reflection not as a scholar observing from afar, but as someone who has walked the alleys of Chinese villages, witnessed the pace and precision of reform, and now carries those insights into the service of my country.

Chinese governance is defined by a deeply structured approach to problem-solving. It is goal-oriented, capable of long-term planning, and deeply integrated with delivery mechanisms that extend to the village level. The system prioritizes stability, cohesion and service delivery, and adapts constantly to emergent challenges. Meanwhile, Chinese modernization is not simply about infrastructure or GDP growth. It is about the synchronization of material advancement with cultural confidence, social equity and environmental stewardship. It is about improving lives, not just statistics.

Why should this matter to Africa? Because Africa, like China, is rising from a complex past of external impositions, internal fragmentation and persistent underdevelopment. Africa is seeking not a mirror of China's path, but the tools to chart its own — with lessons adapted, not adopted. The story of China's rise offers Africa a valuable toolkit for transformation: patient planning, investment in people, and unrelent-

ing focus on the implementation of national objectives.

In the current global landscape, Africa must be economically empowered to stand strong. With over 1.4 billion people, Africa has the chance to become a continent of producers, not merely consumers. We can feed the world, fuel it with renewable energy, and innovate from the margins. And what better partner can help us rise than China? China has the knowledge, the technology, the will and, perhaps most importantly, the discipline to help get it done.

Economic development is the most sustainable cure for insecurity and political instability. Guns fall silent when people have jobs, when youth have hope, when institutions deliver, and when dignity is restored.

Why should this matter to Somalia? Somalia today stands on the brink of a new chapter. It is emerging — slowly but resolutely. It is blessed with two great rivers, vast stretches of arable land, untapped marine wealth and an entrepreneurial spirit unmatched in the region. It has natural ports, a young population and a geography that places it at the crossroads of the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Horn of Africa.

China has long recognized this potential. The partnership between China and Somalia is not new. It is historic, and visible in the everyday lives of Somalis. In the memories of my generation and the generation before me, one image is constant: hard-working Chinese engineers and workers, silently and diligently constructing roads, bridges and hospitals. The only highway connecting northern and southern Somalia was built by China. Over 80 major infrastructure projects have been undertaken with Chinese support. The hybrid rice program, under the guidance of Professor Yuan Longping who developed high-yield rice varieties, brought us rice self-sufficiency much closer to reaching food security.

And even when Somalia's central government collapsed in 1991, China did not retreat. It stood firm in international fora, defending Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Humanitarian support flowed in times of imminent crisis. The friendship did not waver; it remained

strong and steady.

Today, Somalia is not only transforming — it is reclaiming its place among the community of nations with purpose and quiet determination. It recognizes that true transformation is never immediate. It is forged patiently, through the slow and often painful work of rebuilding institutions, restoring public trust and nurturing hope.

The recently adopted National Transformation Plan reflects this ethos. It is not merely a document of intent; it is a declaration of will. It captures a new national consensus — Somalia must invest in its people, build resilient institutions, and harness its geographic and economic potential to drive long-term prosperity. At its core, the plan acknowledges a truth long understood in development economics: growth without structure is fragile, and potential without strategy is wasted.

The country is focusing on building institutions that can carry the weight of ambition, that are transparent, responsive and grounded in the rule of law. It is investing in the capabilities of the Somali people — not just as beneficiaries of development, but as agents of change. Youth, women, entrepreneurs — they are the engines for the country's renewal.

At the same time, it is reconnecting Somalia to the region and the world. Somalia joined the East African Community last year, becoming its eighth member. This integration into a regional bloc with a combined GDP exceeding \$300 billion opens new avenues for trade, investment and policy harmonization, positioning Somalia as a vital link between the Horn of Africa and broader continental markets. Its ports and corridors are once again bridges to markets across the Red Sea, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Somalia is a gateway, not a periphery. And it is actively shaping the future through trade, digital connectivity, and strategic partnerships.

Those looking at Somalia from afar should not measure the country by its past fragility, but by its current resolve. They should not overlook it because of the challenges it faces, but re-recognize it because of its possibilities. Somalia is ready — not just to receive investment, but to partner in progress. Its potential is not theoretical. It is real, it is



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

measurable, and increasingly, it is visible.

By scaling up research collaborations and academic exchanges between African institutions, Chinese universities and third-country partners, the intellectual infrastructure for long-term development is being created — solutions that come from shared inquiry, not policy transfer.

Moving beyond extractive engagement to focus on building manufacturing and value-addition hubs, special economic zones and agro-industrial parks, when paired with infrastructure and skills training, can generate employment and build domestic capacity for export-led growth.

On the other hand, investment will not flow unless risk is mitigated. The creation of joint Africa-China risk-sharing instruments is proposed to reduce risks facing private investment in frontier economies. Mixed finance vehicles, sovereign guaran-

tees and political risk insurance mechanisms can catalyze capital where it is most needed.

As we look to the future, the partnership between Somalia and China — and more broadly, between Africa and China — must be defined not only by trade and infrastructure, but by a shared vision of transformation rooted in dignity, equity and mutual respect. Ours is not a story of dependence, but of emergence — of a nation and a continent determined to write their own chapters in the global narrative. And for those who believe in building bridges, Somalia is open, ready and reaching forward.

The author is Somali ambassador to China. 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.

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Discovery sheds light on early agriculture

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Foundations, road and tombs suggest site is 9,000 years old, **Fang Aiqing** reports.

At Xiatang village in Xianju county, East China's Zhejiang province, remains of a primitive village more than 9,000 years old have been discovered. There, residents of this ancient settlement cultivated rice, built houses, and fired pottery over a span exceeding 5,000 years.

Excavations conducted in 2018 and from 2022 to 2024 that cover an area of 2,250 square meters — less than one-third the size of a standard soccer field — have revealed the general layout of the village. Various necessary components of an agricultural society, such as house foundations, a food processing base, a ditch, a road and tombs, have been found.

Chen Xingcan, a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, says:

"The Xiatang archaeological site is one of China's earliest known settlements with agricultural practices. It presents a panoramic view of the settlement forms and structures of an early agricultural society, providing a vital specimen for studying the early rice farming societies in southern China."

In late April, the site was included among the country's top 10 archaeological discoveries for 2024, jointly released by the China Cultural Relics News and the Society for Chinese Archaeology. The annual list is recognized as one of the highest domestic honors in archaeology.

Discovered in 1984, the Xiatang site is located at the center of a basin, elevated 1 to 2 meters above the surrounding farmland and covering an area of around 30,000 sq m. It's flanked by rivers on the east and west, and around 2 kilometers to its south is the Lingjiang River, Zhejiang's third-largest water system.

Cultural layers of the site — referring to stratified soil and material deposits with each layer representing a distinct period of human activities — has reached 2.5 meters, encompassing the periods of Shangshan (c. 8000-6500 BC), Kuahuqiao (c. 6300-5200 BC), Hemudu (c. 5000-3300 BC) and Haocuan (c. 2500-2000 BC) cultures.

Zhong Zhaobing, a research librarian at the Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, leads the excavations of Xiatang. He says that the site is unique across China as this single ancient settlement lasted 5,000 years and spanned the entire Neolithic period.

"It serves as crucial evidence for the independent origin and continuous development of China's 10,000 years of cultural history," he adds.

While rice farming originated in the Yangtze River Basin, the Shangshan culture — the earliest known Neolithic culture in the lower reaches of Yangtze River — is considered the cradle of the cultivation.

A research team led by Lyu Houyuan from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that wild rice was prevalent at the regions influenced by Shangshan culture as early as around 100,000 years ago. About 13,000 years ago, human ancestors started to grow rice, and around 2,000 years after that, domesticated rice emerged.



Top: Excavations at the Xiatang archaeological site in Xianju county, Zhejiang province, in August 2024. **Above:** Zhong Zhaobing sketches pottery and stone items unearthed at the site.

The findings were published by the international academic journal *Nature* in May 2024.

Xiatang is the southernmost of the 24 sites associated with the Shangshan culture. Echoing with Lyu's research, at Xiatang, wild rice dating back around 15,000 to 30,000 years has been discovered, while domesticated rice constitutes 75 percent of the rice remains found in the soil deposits of the Shangshan culture, Zhong says.

According to him, the Xiatang site reveals the layout and evolution of the settlement during the mid to late period of Shangshan culture.

Enclosed by the moat is a large

terrace at the center with remnants of four mid-Shangshan culture house foundations — either circular or rectangular, possibly with fence-like facilities — a food processing base, a ditch and a road.

This central terrace is surrounded on its northern and eastern sides by a dozen smaller elevated earthen platforms, where one mid- and two late-Shangshan culture house foundations and three high-level late-Shangshan culture tombs have been found. On the outskirts of the site, archaeologists have also discovered relics of rice fields dating back more than 4,000 years.

Analysis into the leftover traces on

the many millstones unearthed from the food processing base shows that ancient Xiatang residents developed a variety of diet: rice, acorns and coix seeds, apart from pork, deer, fish and freshwater shellfish.

Zhong says the elevated earthen platforms, each being relatively independent and equipped with production, living and ritual facilities, may have represented the basic social organizational units within the ancient village. The central terrace, on the other hand, was likely to have served a public function.

Besides diverse stone tools for farming and handling food, around 400 pottery pieces in various shapes and sizes, such as large-mouthed basins, flat-bottomed jars, bowls and cups, form another highlight of the Xiatang site. Ancient artisans would paint pottery bodies with red pigment made from hematite, or decorate them with stripe patterns before firing them.

Notably, clay mixed with rice husks was applied to strengthen some of the pottery items.

The pottery pieces are typically stored in groups within various pits. "Pottery ware pits are a significant feature of Shangshan culture, although their functions remain unknown," Zhong says.

In one of these 50 pits, there's a large pottery pot containing 15 smaller pieces of ware. The pot, which stands 46 centimeters tall and has a wall thickness of 1.6 cm, and whose mouth has a diameter of 46 cm, the belly 40 cm and base 20 cm, is the largest of its kind discovered at Shangshan cultural sites. Archaeologists speculate that the pot may have been used for cellaring, sacrificial or burial purposes.

Moreover, the three high-level tombs were each buried with more than 20 pottery items, indicating the emergence of social stratification around 8,500 years ago, according to Zhong.

The academic community used to believe that complex social structures supported by a rice-farming economy were formed in the mid to late Neolithic period, exemplified by Zhejiang's Liangzhu culture which thrived around 5,300 to 4,300 years ago.

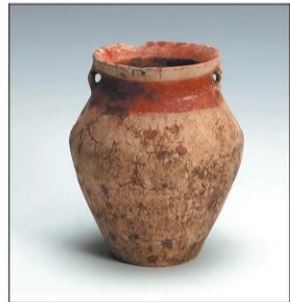
The discovery at Xiatang has pushed the starting point of social differentiation much further back,

says Wang Wei, a veteran CASS archaeologist.

Supported by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, Zhejiang, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces jointly started a research program in 2022 to study the formation of early rice farming societies in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The Xiatang site has been included into this program since 2023.

According to Zhong, further excavations at the Xiatang site are planned for the next five years. This year, efforts will be focusing on uncovering parts of the earthen platforms to the east of the central terrace to thoroughly study their contents, layout and function.

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Pottery vessels discovered at the Xiatang site.



Pottery vessels and a millstone (above) unearthed from the Xiatang site.



At the Xiatang site, remains of a primitive village more than 9,000 years old have been discovered. Residents of this ancient settlement cultivated rice, built houses and fired pottery over a span exceeding 5,000 years, encompassing the entire Neolithic period. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **XU LIN** in Ziyang, Sichuan
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Uncovering history of precious grottoes

Wearing a sun hat and armed with a sickle, Meng Yu carefully clears overgrown vegetation on a small hillside. At the summit lies a concealed cliff adorned with trees and rock-cut Buddhist and Taoist statues first built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

It's at Fengxing village in Anyue county, Ziyang, Sichuan province. Meng and his colleagues discovered the site in 2023 by chance while searching for a temple. They had a fruitless quest until dusk, then by chance a passing villager on a motorcycle mentioned the carvings and niches (a recess for statues) and led them to the site.

Meng, from Anyue Grottoes Research Academy, now returns regularly to monitor the site, which has been listed as one of Anyue's new discoveries of the ongoing fourth national census on cultural relics in China.

"Numerous stone carvings are scattered across secluded mountains and forests in the county. Even local officials may not know them all. Only some villagers are aware of their existence, but you need to bump into the right person," says Yang Xiuwei, head of the cultural studies department of Anyue Grottoes Research Academy.

Two drainage channels are carved into the cliff face, while the rock sur-



Left: A hidden cliff features rock-cut Buddhist and Taoist statues first built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), at Fengxing village, Anyue county, Ziyang, Sichuan province. **Right:** Meng Yu takes photos of niches of Tang Dynasty Buddhist and Taoist statues in Tangjiagou, Anyue county. PHOTOS BY XU LIN / CHINA DAILY

face is dotted with rows of small round or square holes, indicating the existence of a wood structure built against the cliff.

According to villagers, they used to be niches of statues on the other side of the cliff until the 1970s, but they have collapsed. "The statues' sizes, proportions and lines indicate that the niches were constructed in the mid-to-late Tang Dynasty," Meng says.

"Anyue's followers of Buddhism and Taoism like to go to nearby nich-

es to worship. The site has likely been forgotten over the past decades due to its remote location."

Deemed as the "Hometown of Chinese Stone Carvings," Anyue boasts over 100,000 surviving cliff statues from the Tang and Song (960-1279) dynasties, along with nearly 400,000 characters of engraved Buddhist scriptures.

It's believed that Anyue's stone carvings have stylistic and thematic connections with the Longmen Grottoes

in Luoyang, Henan province, and the Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing.

The popular video game *Black Myth: Wukong* also features Anyue's stone carvings of exquisite Buddhist statues in its scenes, drawing widespread public attention.

During the fourth national census on cultural relics, the county's 10 teams have rechecked all the 912 immovable cultural relics registered during the third national survey, and discovered 321 new heritage sites so far.

About 2 kilometers away from the first cluster is another site of rock-cut Buddhist and Taoist statues, in Tangjiagou. One of the two surviving cliff inscriptions concludes with a specific date marked with a reign title of Tang Emperor Wenzong, indicating that the note was carved in the year 835.

"Both sites hold significant value for the study of religious statues and the evolution of beliefs in the Sichuan-Chongqing region," Yang says.

According to him, the county's heritage conservation tasks include systematically categorizing all stone carvings, meticulously documenting them, and installing protective signage. "Stone carvings face risks such as weathering, water erosion and biological deterioration. We should take full conservation measures based on research findings."

He says the county's vast scattered stone carvings make comprehensive inventory efforts challenging. Following the fourth national census directive to register all relics, teams have documented some previously unrecorded sites.

Starting from this year, the county government has allocated 10 million yuan (\$1.39 million) annually for three consecutive years to address critical conservation challenges of key cultural heritage.

Tan Chang, deputy county head, says Anyue's mechanism has benefited the fourth national census. For example, the county leadership has direct charge of the survey. This allows cross-department coordination, work incentive systems and mentorship pairing experienced veterans with younger team members.

Teams visit across the county to raise awareness of cultural heritage protection and gather clues about relics. The authorities also encourage villagers to be volunteering guardians of cultural relics.

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Embracing Culture **CULTURE**

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From left: An archaeological site in northern Morocco. Young Moroccans say hi to Chinese tourists at a Meknes forum in December 2024. A major tourist attraction, Chefchaouen is seen as dominated by shades of blue in April 2024. Roses put in a copper tin during a Moroccan Rose Festival. A view of the Sahara desert in Merzouga. PHOTOS BY XINHUA AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shared trust and traditions

China and Morocco share cultural new visa-free travel gives greater

ties that are set to become even stronger, especially as potential to further exchanges, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Ma Kai couldn't have been more thrilled two weeks ago when he finally received approval for his transport license, the key to unlocking his vision for tourism in Morocco.

Nine months after applying, his tourism operation Yuetu in Casablanca became one of the first Chinese-owned travel companies to obtain a license since the pandemic.

"We've bought new vehicles and hired reliable drivers," says the man in his 30s, originally from Central China's Henan province.

Owning a fleet of vehicles now means full control over the travel experience, ensuring his clients receive seamless service, from airport pickups to desert excursions.

Ma observes that the tourism industry has rebounded to its pre-pandemic levels since 2023, with a significant increase in Chinese business travelers.

After graduating from Beijing Foreign Studies University with a degree in Arabic language and culture, Ma has built a unique life and career in Morocco.

He is drawn to the country's rich history and the allure of its diverse landscapes spanning the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara desert.

His fascination with Morocco began during his university years when he learned about famed Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta and the country's geographic wonders. When Morocco introduced visa-free travel for Chinese nationals in 2016, Ma began conducting market research and laying the groundwork for his tourism venture.

Upon arrival, he immersed himself in the local tourism industry, working as a guide and translator to understand the market firsthand.

It wasn't long before he observed a deep trust among Moroccans. "During prayer times, shopkeepers often leave their stores unattended, placing only a stick or a chair at the entrance to signal they're away," he notes. "This level of trust was eye-opening."

Another impressive cultural phenomenon he identifies with is the emphasis on family and community.

"My Moroccan mother-in-law is always visiting relatives — family gatherings are constant," he shares.

Ma's company specializes in customized tours that blend Morocco's historical depth with unique cultural experiences. From fossil-hunting expeditions in the Atlas Mountains to witnessing the annual Damask rose harvest, his



Clockwise from left: Rose Festival in Kalaat M'Gouna, in May; A Moroccan poses with a performer of a Chinese children's play in May; Two boys experience Chinese culture in February; A showcase of Chinese tea culture in May; A girl dresses up for a festival in January. PHOTOS / AP AND XINHUA

itineraries cater to niche interests.

He also arranges immersive experiences, such as celebrating Eid al-Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice) with Moroccan families.

"Many Chinese visitors are surprised by the Moroccans' warm hospitality," he says. "Business partners might greet them with flowers or even a live band at the airport — it's a level of personal attention that resonates with Chinese guests," he notes.

Journeys of understanding

Ma's observations mirror a larger trend recognized by Morocco's tourism authorities. As Chinese arrivals rebound, the government is actively cultivating this market.

Hicham Bellaziz, director of China at the Moroccan National Tourism Office, has promoted Morocco across China for two years and witnessed over a 70-percent increase in Chinese arrivals during the 2023-24 period.

"Tourism from China has steadily increased each year, peaking in 2019, when we welcomed over 150,000 Chinese visitors," he says.

The visa-free policy is a key factor in boosting these numbers. With two direct flights added to connect Beijing and Shanghai, we are confident we will surpass the 2019 figures," he adds.

Bellaziz sees great potential in coop-

eration between Morocco and China, as the two countries share a culture deeply rooted in respect for tradition.

"This shared cultural reverence forms a foundation for mutual understanding," he says.

Morocco has collaborated with big tourism players in China following the pandemic to relaunch their activities and introduce what Morocco offers on Chinese social media platforms like WeChat and RedNote.

Additionally, Moroccan authorities have organized trade events in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province to showcase Morocco's diverse tourism offerings.

"One of Morocco's greatest appeals is its cultural diversity. From the coastal city of Casablanca and the majestic Sahara desert to the vibrant blue of Chefchaouen, each place offers a unique experience. For Chinese travelers, this variety resonates with their desire to explore different layers in one trip," Bellaziz says.

"Morocco's culture, influenced by Arabs, Berbers, Jews, and Europeans, provides a mosaic that is not only visually stunning but also historically significant," he adds. "The country's ancient monuments, cities and customs offer Chinese travelers a chance to

immerse themselves in centuries-old traditions that are different yet somehow familiar due to our shared values."

Morocco also is keen to explore cultural exchange, especially in the realm of music.

"The musical traditions in certain Moroccan regions have strikingly similar styles found in China. We're considering making a documentary exploring how these musical similarities could strengthen the cultural ties between our two nations," Bellaziz says.

He has also noticed a trend in which Chinese tourists are exploring Morocco more independently, with small groups and families instead of through organized tours.

"This allows them to appreciate the depth of Moroccan culture at their own pace," he says.

Beyond tourism, Bellaziz foresees good prospects in cultural exchange.

"Morocco can serve as a bridge for China, offering a gateway to African and Arab cultures, while also providing a chance for Morocco to learn from China's long-standing traditions in areas like philosophy, art and architecture," he says.

A bilateral future

Liu Xinlu, vice-president of the Beijing Foreign Studies University and a senior expert in Arabic studies, points

out that China and Morocco, though oceans apart, are weaving a shared cultural and economic destiny.

From Morocco's breathtaking blend of Arab, African and Mediterranean influences to China's rise as a partner in development, the two nations are discovering mutual respect and growing synergy, Liu says.

"Morocco's openness — where Christmas trees can be found standing beside mosques and ancient Roman ruins neighbor vibrant souks — resonates with China's philosophy of 'harmony without uniformity,'" Liu explains.

"Both civilizations have thrived by absorbing outside influences while retaining their core identity," he adds.

Liu believes the bilateral future of the two countries shines bright, as more film festivals, literary exchanges and student programs deepen understanding, while renewable energy, tech and agricultural collaborations promise mutual growth.

"In a world often divided, China and Morocco's friendship stands as a beacon of cooperation, curiosity, and shared prosperity," Liu says.

Deng Junnan, general manager of CTG Travel Services' outbound travel division for North China, owes Morocco's growing popularity in the Chinese market to TV shows and films showcasing the country's stunning landscapes and rich heritage, as well as Morocco's visa-free policy and direct flights. "World heritage sites, desert experiences, and family-oriented travel are popular among Chinese tourists," Deng says, adding that the most praised segment in classic itineraries is viewing the Sahara's sunset and stargazing.

She is looking forward to direct flights connecting more cities on both sides, as Chinese travelers show an increasing demand for unique, less crowded experiences in Morocco.

Ma Kai has fully embraced local life — he married a Moroccan woman and is raising a family. While cultural differences, such as dietary habits, still require adjustment, he values the simplicity and integrity of Moroccan society.

"My employees return lost cash and valuables to guests without hesitation," he says. "I deeply admire that honesty."

After nine years in Morocco, Ma plans to continue fostering cross-cultural understanding through tourism. "Morocco is my second home," he says. "Through my work, I hope more Chinese travelers will discover its beauty and warmth."

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SPORTS

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A Shanghai glove affair

UFC returns to Chinese mainland with August extravaganza

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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The Ultimate Fighting Championship continues to punch high and heavy in its global ambition with a return to the Chinese mainland expected to help elevate mixed martial arts into the nation's sporting mainstream.

Six years since last staging a live event in the mainland, the Las Vegas-based MMA promotion has realized that, when bringing its fights back again, public awareness of the mixed-discipline combat sport has grown much stronger than expected, paving the way for guaranteed success on its return this summer.

"When we had our first fight in 2017, we had cautious optimism, we didn't know for sure if we would do well," Kevin Chang, UFC senior vice-president and head of Asia, said of UFC's mainland debut in Shanghai, which was followed over the next two years by events in Beijing and Shenzhen.

"This time around, we know what to expect," Chang said after the UFC announced last week that it will host its second Fight Night in Shanghai on Aug 23.

"We know it's going to be well attended and have huge media interest, and this will create waves that will set us up for more success in the future. That's the expectation now, not a hope."

Sure, the MMA juggernaut has every reason to expect a smashing success this time around, now that it has signed 17 Chinese athletes to multi-fight contracts, crowned a world champion in strawweight belt holder Zhang Weili, opened its largest Performance Institute in the country, and amassed over 16 million followers across major social media platforms.

Although not having confirmed the matchups on the card yet, the Fight Night at the Shanghai Indoor Stadium will be a celebration of MMA's exponential growth in China and a statement to the UFC's continuous localization efforts, Chang said.

"Our Chinese athletes are making a statement in UFC that they are a force to be reckoned with, and we are excited to showcase their talent in the city where it all began," he added.

The Fight Night will be the fourth such show to be held on the mainland and eighth overall on Chinese soil, including four events held in the Macao Special Administrative Region from 2012-2024.



China's featherweight standout Li Kaiwen (right) has punched his way into the 2025 Road to UFC semifinals, which will be staged as part of the Shanghai Fight Night in August, via a TKO win against South Korea's Seo Dong-hyun, keeping his dream of joining the global MMA promotion alive. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The event will be co-organized by Shanghai's Municipal Sports Bureau, Alibaba subsidiary Orange Lion Sports and UFC's broadcast partner Migu, a China Mobile-owned streaming platform.

"We have always maintained close communication with top international events and organizations such as UFC, and this collaboration to bring the UFC event back to Shanghai will deepen our presence in the sports industry," said Mu Yang, chairman and CEO of Orange Lion Sports, formerly known as Alibaba Sports.

"The city of Shanghai, as our headquarters, has given us great support. This collaboration with UFC has ushered us into a new era. In the future, we will bring more influential events to the doorstep of Chinese fans."

Road to UFC hailed

Despite it being unlikely she will lace up for a fight so soon after defending her strawweight title in February, Zhang, who beat Brazilian wrestler Jessica Andrade to claim the 115-pound (52 kilogram) belt at the 2019 Shenzhen event, said she can



From left: Reigning UFC strawweight belt holder Zhang Weili, welterweight contender Song Yadong and light heavyweight star Zhang Mingyang announce the UFC Fight Night Shanghai.

not wait to get involved in the Shanghai event, regardless of her role.

"You will probably see me cheering them on from the sideline, or commenting, or promoting the event as an ambassador. I will be there, for sure," said Zhang, who attended a news conference in

Shanghai on Thursday to announce the event.

More of her compatriots are expected to feel the adrenaline rush of a home fight, with semifinals of season four of Road to UFC confirmed to take place on the eve of the Aug 23 main event at the same ven-

ue, where a total of 16 contenders, having fought their way out of the opening round last week, will vie for final berths and the coveted opportunity to sign professional contracts with UFC.

The RTU talent selection program was launched in 2022 particularly for the Asia-Pacific region, and annually awards winners of four divisions — flyweight, bantamweight, featherweight and lightweight — lucrative multi-fight contracts.

Since the first edition, a total number of seven Chinese athletes have earned pro contracts with UFC by punching their way along that pathway.

Five Chinese youngsters, led by featherweight standout Li Kaiwen, defeated their respective opponents at last week's first round at the Shanghai PI to advance into the semis.

"I am back to pick up what I missed out on before. I will prove that I belong (in the UFC)," stylish striker Li said after his TKO win against South Korea's Seo Dong-hyun on Thursday.

"This is a great path to the Octagon, and quite an invaluable test



Our Chinese athletes are making a statement in UFC that they are a force to be reckoned with, and we are excited to showcase their talent in the city where it all began."

Kevin Chang, UFC senior vice-president and head of Asia

before the main stage," said Li, who missed a shot at UFC promotion in 2023 after submitting to compatriot Yizha in the division final.

Watching his fellow countrymen pursue their Octagon dream at the home tournament, China's rising light heavyweight star Zhang Mingyang urged them to draw strength from their predecessors and seize the opportunity, one which would not have been possible just a few years ago.

"When the whole crowd of over 10,000 people chanted 'China Power!' I felt my blood was boiling," Zhang Mingyang said of watching welterweight pioneer Li Jingliang interact with Shanghai fans after a knockout win at the 2017 Fight Night.

"Ever since, it was my goal to become a pro MMA fighter like Li, and the RTU has helped me realize it. Hopefully, more young fighters will follow the same path," said Zhang Mingyang, who earned his UFC contract by winning the 2022 RTU final.

With a consistent supply of young talent emerging from local and regional promotions, the UFC is bullish on MMA's sustainable growth in the birthplace of ancient martial arts, and its business prospects in its biggest overseas market.

"Where we go from here is that we just keep adding; we build strength on strength," said Chang.

"We just keep doing what we are doing. Our investments in the academy (at the PI) and in the RTU, they don't stop. It's just such an important market for us to be able to have success."

"Our goal is to become a globally iconic sports property, and to do that, you have to be in the mainstream in every part of the world. China is of course no exception to that."

TENNIS

RG pays 'unforgettable' tribute to retired 'King of Clay' Nadal

PARIS — Rafael Nadal was given a rousing reception as the 'King of Clay' stepped onto Court Philippe Chatrier for the final time on Sunday in an "unforgettable" ceremony to celebrate his career at the French Open.

The 38-year-old, who retired from tennis last November, was serenaded by the Roland Garros crowd, with spectators wearing different colored T-shirts to create the message "14 RG, Rafa".

Nadal dominated the French Open after winning on his debut as a teenager in 2005, lifting the trophy a record-breaking 14 times.

The Spaniard finished with a remarkable 112-4 win-loss record at the clay-court Grand Slam.

He last won the title in 2022 and played his final match on the Paris clay last year, when he was defeated by Alexander Zverev in the first round.

"I don't know how to start. I've been playing on this court for 20 years. I suffered, I won, I lost. I have lived many emotions here on this court," an emotional Nadal told the crowd after watching a video of his career highlights at Roland Garros.

Nadal's family and friends watched from the player's box, along with many of his former coaching staff, including his uncle Toni.

"It has been unforgettable, plenty of emotions for a guy like me that



Recently retired Spanish great Rafael Nadal stands alone on Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros on Sunday, as fans show their appreciation of his record at the French Open in a special ceremony. AFP

doesn't live these kinds of things because I'm still a little bit shy for all this stuff," Nadal told reporters.

"I don't much like being the center of attention for these things. It was enough when I was playing tennis. But, I enjoyed it, honestly. I suffered a little bit with the emotions, but I enjoyed a lot."

Old rivals pay homage

Nadal's long-time rivals Novak Djokovic, fresh from winning his 100th ATP title on Saturday, Roger Federer and Andy Murray all joined him on court.

The trio walked out after Nadal's speech to greet their fellow former world No 1, to a deafening roar

from the fans. "To have my three biggest rivals there on the court with me meant a lot," Nadal said of the other members of the 'Big Four'.

"At the same time, it's a great message for the world, I think, that best rivals, the toughest rivals probably in the history of our sport, are able



I don't know how to start. I've been playing on this court for 20 years. I suffered, I won, I lost. I have lived many emotions here on this court. It has been unforgettable, plenty of emotions for a guy like me that doesn't love these kinds of things, because I'm still a little bit shy for all this stuff."

Rafael Nadal, speaking at a farewell ceremony at Roland Garros on Sunday

to be good colleagues, to respect each other."

"You don't need to hate the opponent to try to beat him with all your force. And that's the message that I think we showed people, we showed the new generations, and, in some way, that's our legacy."

Nadal hung up his racket follow-

ing the 2024 Davis Cup Finals in Malaga, initially denying him an opportunity to wave goodbye to his adoring fans in Paris.

His tally of 14 victories at a single Grand Slam appears unlikely to be beaten, with Margaret Court's 11 Australian Open titles second on the all-time list.

Nadal was presented with a special trophy commemorating his French Open record, with a mark of his footprint carved into the clay.

"I didn't know anything about the ceremony," Nadal said.

"Only thing that I knew before going there was that there was going to be a video when I go on, then my speech and then a couple of surprises."

"Then, when I saw that, I thought it was going to be just for this year. Knowing that's going to be there forever, it's a present that I can't describe in words."

The 22-time Grand Slam champion received a send-off after his final match at the Davis Cup, but French tennis federation chief Gilles Moreton said earlier this year that "the tribute was not, in my opinion, what it should have been."

He said he had gone to visit Nadal at his home in December, along with Roland Garros tournament director Amelie Mauresmo, to discuss plans for Sunday's ceremony.

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