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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM
CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025

EU eyes trade deal, but keeps options open

Bloc preparing to impose retaliatory tariffs on US 'if negotiations are not satisfactory'

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The European Union is striving to cut a trade deal with the United States within the 90-day period of "reciprocal tariff" suspension even as it readies possible countermeasures against its transatlantic trade partner should talks fail.

The EU faces the prospect of tariffs of 20 percent on its exports to the US when the 90-day suspension expires in early July.

The European Commission has offered to buy more US goods to narrow its trade deficit with the country. US President Donald Trump earlier rejected an EU offer of a zero-for-zero tariff trade-off on industrial goods.

Trump has repeatedly complained about the EU's trade surplus and trade barriers. The bloc has argued that while in 2023 there was a goods trade surplus of \$168 billion in favor of the EU, the US had a surplus of \$117 billion in services trade with the EU.

"We absolutely are committed to finding agreements with the US that benefit both sides," Olof Gill, a European Commission spokesman, said last week.

However, no formal offer has been made to the US on anything, he said, referring to a Financial Times report that said the EU wants to increase the value of its purchases of US goods by 50 billion euros (\$56.72 billion) to reduce its trade deficit.

The report, based on interviews with EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic, said the EU is looking to increase its purchases of liquid natural gas from the US as well as agricultural products such as soybeans.

The commission has presented its 27 member states a list of concessions it is willing to make to the

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Politico reported.

The EU has also suspended tariffs of 10 to 25 percent it had imposed on \$23 billion of US imports in retaliation to the US imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum, even though the US has not suspended tariffs of up to 25 percent on EU cars, steel and aluminum.

"If negotiations are not satisfactory, our countermeasures will kick in," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said while announcing the suspension on April 10.

Last week she told the European People's Party Congress in Valencia, Spain, that "global markets are shaken by the unpredictable tariff policy of the US administration".

Pascal Lamy, a former director-general of the World Trade Organization, said any EU retaliation against the US should not be on goods alone, but also on services, including financial and digital ones.

"The EU has two options. One is to try to negotiate, and if that doesn't work, the second option is to retaliate," Lamy said on Friday.

The US has not shown any desire for a negotiated settlement, he said.

If the US maintains tariffs that violate its WTO commitments, other countries will have the right to retaliate and seek compensation, Lamy said.

"At the end of the day, it's a lose-lose game. But there has to be a price for a country which belongs to an international organization and which has (made a firm) commitment (to that organization)," he added.

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US as well as a new list of goods on which it plans to impose retaliatory tariffs should negotiations fail,

Travel fever



An overseas tourist takes a selfie on Saturday at a historical and cultural block of Pingjiang Road in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province. China's inbound tourism market has witnessed significant growth, with smaller cities attracting foreign visitors during the just-concluded May Day holiday. SUN JIALU / FOR CHINA DAILY See story, page 3

New financing facility to bolster stability

By ZHOU LANXU
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The ASEAN+3 members have agreed to launch a new financing facility that would help economies in the region access liquidity of freely usable currencies, including the renminbi, in times of emergency, a significant step forward in the region's collective efforts to safeguard financial stability amid heightened uncertainties, officials and experts said.

Experts said the move reflects the region's firm commitment to financial cooperation and regional integration, which would serve as a powerful counterweight to the US unilateralist pressures and be a key stabilizing force for the global economy.

At the 28th ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting, held on Sunday in Milan, Italy, financial leaders in the region endorsed the establishment of a new facility under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation, or CMIM, a regional financial safety net established by ASEAN+3 countries — the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, plus China, Japan and South Korea.

The new facility, named the Rapid Financing Facility, incorporates eligible non-dollar currencies, including the Chinese renminbi, as currencies of choice used for providing financing to member economies, according to a statement released on Monday by the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the central bank, said the establishment of the facility — with the incorporation of non-dollar freely usable currencies including the renminbi — will not only expand the available resources under the CMIM but also

marks meaningful progress in diversifying the international monetary system in the region.

Pan said it is crucial to further improve the CMIM and strengthen the regional financial safety net, as unilateralism is affecting the international governance system, leading to significantly higher economic and financial risks facing the ASEAN+3 region.

Liu Ying, a researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said the new facility is of great significance as it will broaden the source of liquidity support for ASEAN+3 economies in times of financial stress. Previously, they mainly relied on short-term US dollar liquidity under the CMIM.

"This will strengthen their ability to withstand the ongoing global financial volatility and meet the region's demand for alternative international currencies, as confidence in the dollar has been dampened by US tariff policies," Liu said.

She added that the facility shows the region's commitment to multilateralism, which would effectively help to offset the disruption caused by US tariff policies on the global economy, given the economic heft of the region — which accounts for around 40 percent or more of global GDP growth.

At the meeting, which mainly discussed the global and regional macroeconomic situation as well as regional financial cooperation, finance ministers and central bank governors called for enhanced unity and cooperation to weather heightened uncertainties, according to the joint statement from the meeting.

"We will promote greater intra-regional trade and investment flows to strengthen the region's resilience against external shocks," the state-

ment said, while reaffirming the region's full commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based, non-discriminatory, free, fair, open, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system.

Speaking at the meeting, Chinese Finance Minister Lan Fo'an emphasized China's willingness to work with other ASEAN+3 members to uphold openness, inclusiveness and regional solidarity to enhance stability and certainty, at a time when rising unilateralism and protectionism are bringing considerably more unstable and uncertain factors.

Vowing to deepen regional financial cooperation, Lan announced a renewed contribution of \$4 million to the China TA Trust Fund under the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office. The fund will help strengthen macroeconomic surveillance and financial stability efforts in the region, the Ministry of Finance said.

Lan also called for all parties to uphold multilateralism and free trade, making greater contributions to regional economic and financial stability and integration.

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor of international economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said the minister's remarks sent a strong signal of China's opposition to unilateralism and its defense of regional economic stability.

Liu said there is scope for tariff reduction within the region while strengthening intra-regional infrastructure connectivity to further reduce reliance on the US market, adding that China's strength in infrastructure can be shared with other members to enhance overall regional resilience.

Liu Zhihua contributed to this story.

FINDING DIGNITY AND PEACE AT THE END OF LIFE

As population ages, cultural taboo of hospice care slowly lifted

By CAI HONG and LI YI

On May 15, 2024, a family gathered at the palliative care ward of Gulou Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing to take a cherished family photo. The moment was for 87-year-old Yang Nushi, who had suffered a stroke four years ago and had been admitted to the ward just days earlier.

The hospital staff, upon learning of Yang's lifelong love for Peking Opera, decorated her room with photos from her younger days, including images of her performing in elaborate costumes. They added a touch of spring, with blooming pink peach blossoms and lush greenery.

In-depth

Yang's husband, Li Xiansheng, held a bouquet of pink flowers as he gazed tenderly into her eyes. The couple, both from Suzhou in Jiangsu province, shared a love spanning more than six decades. The two married in 1962.

"We were classmates in high school and later attended Peking University together," Li said. "After graduation, we even worked at the same place."

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Missile attack



Police officers inspect a crater on Sunday in the vicinity of Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, after a missile launched by Yemen's Houthi forces hit the area. The attack injured six people and halted flights at the airport. JACK GUEZ / AFP See story, page 7

Renewed science agreement secures stable future for all

In one of its last acts involving US-China relations, the former administration of US president Joe Biden agreed with Beijing in December to extend the Agreement Between the United States and China on Cooperation in Science and Technology for another five years. While China recognized the renewal as an important step in advancing technological progress of both nations as well as enhancing bilateral collaboration on global challenges, some critics of China felt such a collaboration

could bolster the Chinese military and lead to losses in critical and emerging technologies for the US.

Before the agreement expired last August, there were fears that Biden could terminate it. The previous renewal took place during the Donald Trump administration in September 2018.

While the new agreement has not yet been made public, various reports indicate that it differs from prior agreements as it only addresses government-to-government

cooperation and avoids collaborations that pose security risks. But doubts aside, the agreement has the potential to strengthen intellectual property protection, create guardrails for protection of researchers and contain new provisions on transparency and data reciprocity. By focusing on basic research and information sharing in areas such as weather, oceanography, seismology and health, the agreement naturally benefits both sides. With time, its implementation will hopefully

appease even its harshest critics.

The renewal of the agreement is more significant today than when it was first signed in 1979 by late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and former US president Jimmy Carter. In the initial decades, the US was likely the primary "technology donor". But now, cooperating with China is critical considering such factors as budget cuts made by the Trump administration in the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health and other science

WORLD WATCH

By Mark Cohen

agencies. Furthermore, unlike in 1979, the US has more to learn from China as the latter's scientific ecosystem continues to develop rapidly. China's investments in basic science have the potential to expand global frontiers. Projects such as the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory in Guangdong province are intended to answer fundamental questions about particle physics.

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

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Three of Yang's nieces traveled from Suzhou to participate in the photo session, creating a moment of shared gratitude and connection. Though her speech was labored, Yang expressed her thanks in her own way. The medical team, a social worker and a volunteer also joined in for the photos, marking a poignant moment of unity and care.

The family photo was one of many efforts to honor Yang's final chapter, supported by the medical professionals at the hospital's hospice care ward.

New approach

Gulou Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine is among Beijing's first pilot institutions offering hospice care.

"We integrate traditional Chinese medicine techniques, such as acupuncture, moxibustion, and cupping therapy, to alleviate pain and symptoms like abdominal bloating and constipation," explained Han Danyang, director of oncology at the hospital.

"Our multidisciplinary approach aims to help patients feel comfortable, peaceful and dignified in their final days," Han said.

The palliative care ward provides holistic support for terminally ill patients and their families, addressing medical, physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs.

"The goal is to help people facing the end of life to do so with comfort, peace and dignity," Han added.

Hospice care emphasizes quality of life and dignity. It operates on the philosophy that death is a natural part of life and that people should live fully and comfortably for as long as they can, surrounded by loved ones.

"We cannot control when life begins, but we can choose how we think about death," said Lu Guijun, director of the pain management department at Beijing Tsinghua Changgung Hospital.

With 27 years of experience in palliative care, Lu has witnessed countless unique and meaningful farewells. "Some patients held personal photography exhibitions, others hosted farewell dance parties. Some wanted to spend their final moments with their pets or chose specific music for their funerals. Others simply asked for one last sip of cola or coffee," Lu recounted.

For Lu, death is not a taboo. "Hospitals are places of healing, but they are also places of farewell. If we don't understand death, we cannot truly appreciate the boundaries of saving lives," he said.

Since launching its palliative care ward in 2019, Lu's hospital has cared for over 300 patients, most of whom were in the late stages of solid tumors. The average survival time in the ward is about one month.

"People at the end of life need more than just medication. They need a life that is calm, authentic and filled with love," Lu emphasized. "Relieving physical pain is the foundation of palliative care, but it is equally important to ease the emotional suffering of patients and their families."

Palliative care, Lu noted, is about respecting the wishes of patients and their families while minimizing pain and maximizing comfort.

Challenges and promises

The hospice care movement traces its origins to Cicely Saunders, who founded St. Christopher's Hospice in the United Kingdom in 1967. It emerged in response to the limitations of modern medical technology, which, while capable of extending life, often prolonged the suffering of terminally ill patients. Hospice care offered an alternative — prioritizing comfort and dignity over curative treatments.

China began to explore the concept of hospice care in the late 1980s. In 1988, Tianjin Medical College established the country's first hospice care research center. However, progress remained minimal until the last decade. In 2016, hospice care was included in a national health policy document for the first time. The following year, the National Health Commission issued guidelines for its implementation, spurring rapid growth. The number of medical institutions with hospice care departments expanded from 276 in 2018 to 4,259 by the end of 2022.

Despite these strides, the need for palliative care far outweighs its availability. According to a 2024 report by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, China officially entered the "deep aging" stage in 2023, with over 14 percent of its population aged 65 and above. By 2035, the country is projected to become a super-aged society.

China faces further hurdles in medication access. Of the country's 1 million registered medical institutions, only about 36,000 are authorized to prescribe painkillers, and fewer than 18,000 have intravenous pain medications. Fewer than 5,000 institutions nationwide have dedicated palliative care departments. These limitations severely constrain the development of home-based palliative care, which forms the backbone of services in countries like the United States, Japan, and Australia, where over 70 percent of palliative care is delivered at home.

"Palliative care is not about giving up on patients; it's about balancing the length and quality of life," said Chen Yan, a physician in the Palliative Care Department at Fuzhou First Hospital. "It's about focusing on the patient — considering their wishes and addressing their needs."

Fuzhou First Hospital's Palliative Care Department is the only one of its kind in a



A nurse chats with a patient in the palliative care ward at Beijing Luhe Hospital to alleviate his anxiety on March 22 in the capital. LI YAOZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: Volunteers cut a patient's hair at a palliative care ward of Beijing Luhe Hospital. LI YAOZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: Oncology doctor Han Danyang gives acupuncture treatment to a patient at Gulou Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing. ZHOU SHUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A medical worker provides singing bowl healing for a relative of a deceased patient at Gulou Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing. LI YI / CHINA DAILY

Hospices: Easing the pain of final departure

People at the end of life need more than just medication. They need a life that is calm, authentic and filled with love. Relieving physical pain is the foundation of palliative care, but it is equally important to ease the emotional suffering of patients and their families."

Lu Guijun, director of the pain management department at Beijing Tsinghua Changgung Hospital

often face significant hurdles, including long waitlists and limited resources.

Overwhelmed system

At Beijing Tsinghua Changgung Hospital, the palliative care ward consists of just eight beds: four single rooms and two double rooms, the latter often used for day patients requiring short-term pain management. The limited capacity underscores the severe shortage of hospice care services across the country.

Traditional beliefs also play a role. Many Chinese families prioritize prolonging life at any cost, reflecting the sentiment captured in the saying: "It's better to live a wretched existence than to experience a good death."

This cultural mindset often leads to aggressive medical interventions, even in the face of terminal diagnoses.

"Pain can range from mild to severe," explained Li Zhigang, an attending physician in the Pain Management Department at Beijing Tsinghua Changgung Hospital. "Severe pain usually requires advanced treatments, such as spinal cord stimulation, nerve blocks, or intrathecal pain pump implantation."

Cancer-related pain is a significant challenge. In 2022, China reported 4.8 million new cancer cases, the highest number in the world. Among late-stage cancer patients, 60 to 80 percent experience pain, with one-third suffering from severe symptoms.

"Late-stage cancer patients often have complex needs. Beyond pain, they may experience shortness of breath, nausea, bowel obstruction, or edema," said Li Yaling, head nurse of the hospital's palliative care ward.

"Only with specialized care can we provide the comfort these patients deserve."

A path forward

As China grapples with an aging population and a rising demand for end-of-life care, the country must continue to expand hospice services while addressing systemic and cultural barriers.

Han Qide, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has long championed the development of palliative care in China. He identifies a significant cognitive barrier: the prevailing mindset that insists, "Even with a one-in-ten-thousand chance, we must try to save the patient in the ICU."

Gao Huatian, a professor at Sichuan University's West China Hospital, highlighted a common scenario: terminally ill patients sent to ICUs, their bodies connected to tubes and machines in a desperate bid to prolong life. While intended to fulfill filial duties or uphold a doctor's mission, such measures often cause immense suffering.

Globally, 136 countries and regions have established palliative care institutions, with 20 incorporating palliative care into their social health insurance systems. Foundational and continuing medical education, as well as team development, have steadily advanced in these nations.

In recent years, China has shown increasing support for palliative care. The Healthy China 2030 blueprint promotes integrated health and eldercare services, including inpatient treatment, rehabilitation, daily living assistance, and palliative care. In 2020, palliative care was formally included in the Basic Healthcare and Health Promotion Law.

In 2022, Shenzhen became the first city in China to pass legislation allowing terminally ill patients to decline excessive lifesaving treatments, safeguarding their right to a dignified death. The city's revised medical regulation stipulates that medical agencies must respect a patient's living will regarding traumatic rescues, life-supporting machines, or primary disease treatments at the end of life.

For some, the journey into hospice care begins with small, personal steps. Zhang Xue-mei first encountered the concept of hospice care during a charity walk in 2019. Inspired, the then-thirtysomething volunteered at institutions providing end-of-life services.

By 2021, Zhang had become a full-time social worker at a hospice ward in Beijing's Tongzhou district affiliated with Luhe Hospital. Her day begins with morning meetings, where doctors and nurses exchange updates on patients and plan their care. Zhang has built close relationships with each patient in the ward.

"We're here to help patients live as well as possible until they die — and to ensure they die with dignity," Zhang said.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

tertiary hospital in Fujian province. The multidisciplinary team includes doctors, nurses, social workers, volunteers and nutritionists. They offer therapies such as aromatherapy, music therapy, and lymphatic care to provide patients with comprehensive support.

Yet even as the number of hospice facilities increases, the gap between need and availability remains vast. According to Lu Guijun of Beijing Tsinghua Changgung Hospital, more than 10 million people die annually in China, with approximately 3 million deaths from cancer. "Two-thirds of these individuals require palliative care services, but the actual coverage rate is extremely low," Lu said.

Although precise statistics are unavailable, industry experts estimate that less than 10 percent of terminally ill patients in China access palliative care each year. Even those fortunate enough to access such services

TOP NEWS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM



Revellers take part in a balloon parade on Sunday in Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico. The event, considered the largest balloon parade in the world, featured a marine world theme. FRANCISCO GUASCO / EPA-EFE

Shanghai invites expats' insights

City should offer tailored travel routes featuring its literary and artistic stories, expert says

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Shanghai should create unique, unforgettable travel memories for inbound travelers, such as touring historical buildings, learning about traditional Chinese medicine with hands-on experience, and watching a Broadway-style musical, said expat residents who have lived in the city for years.

They also recommended that the city further improve payment convenience, smooth online booking of attractions for expat tourists, and add multilingual signs and services.

The suggestions for enhancing Shanghai's appeal came as the city increases its efforts to build itself into a premier destination for high-level inbound tourism.

In an attempt to promote whole-process people's democracy, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's Shanghai Committee held a symposium for foreigners recently regarding the formulation of the city's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30).

In addition, nine consular officers and five longtime expats in Shanghai were invited to provide insights last month on the development of inbound tourism in Shanghai. They represented countries including Japan, South Korea and the United States as well as some in Southeast Asia.

According to Cheng Meihong, deputy head of the Shanghai Administration of Culture and Tourism, Shanghai recorded 6.7

million inbound tourist visits in 2024, an 84 percent year-on-year increase. In the first quarter of this year, the city received 1.7 million inbound tourist visits, up 37 percent year-on-year.

For years, Japan, the US and South Korea were Shanghai's top three source countries for inbound tourism. However, since the beginning of this year, South Korea, Japan and Thailand have ranked as the city's top three source countries, said Cheng.

"Malaysia and Indonesia are also seeing rapid growth in tourist number to Shanghai. Exchanges between China and neighboring countries are becoming increasingly active," she said.

The expats said Shanghai should offer tailored tourism routes incorporating the city's literary and artistic stories, guided tours of historical buildings led by local architecture students, and a deeper exploration of university tourism resources to attract global visitors, especially young talent.

"Moreover, Shanghai's street food is quite popular among foreign tourists. I suggest providing more insights into the historical background of these culinary delights," said Christie Ho, who is from the US and is former strategic communication partner of a division of the Belgian company Bekaert.

"Also, Shanghai is capable of creating one or two local-style performances like Broadway musicals to serve as a lasting attraction for both local and international visitors," she said.

“(Shanghai's efforts) are transitioning from showcasing what the city has, to understanding and meeting the desires of international visitors these days.”

Feng Xiang, a researcher at the Shanghai Institute for Global City

While English-language signs are widespread in Shanghai, Wonsook Hong, who is from South Korea and is a distinguished expert at Shanghai Hechuan-Rhine TCM Hospital and a visiting professor at Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, highlighted the importance of improving multilingual service guidance for non-English speakers.

Furthermore, in terms of payment convenience, although Shanghai provides 90,000 point-of-service terminals that accept foreign bank cards, there are still calls for more widespread acceptance of point-of-sale payments in restaurants and other places.

Takase Aoyama, vice-consul of the Japanese consulate general in Shanghai, said that “overseas visitors' challenges in registration for Alipay and WeChat and binding credit cards for payment still exist. We hope that the registration process for foreign tourists can be streamlined for smoother usage.”

He also suggested allowing on-site

ticket purchases at attractions, in addition to reserved visits, and enabling passport registration for online reservations, rather than requiring ID-only registration.

The increasing popularity of Shanghai as well as China overall in inbound tourism is closely linked to the expansion of visa-free policies. Justin O'Jack, chief representative of the China Office of the University of Virginia in the United States, said he hopes that the transit visa-free duration can be extended, so that he can take students to have more in-depth experiences in the country.

Berlianto Situngkir, consul general of the Indonesian consulate general in Shanghai, said he hopes that Indonesia and China will further promote visa-free policies to facilitate travel for both sides.

Several of the expats stressed the importance of promoting Shanghai on widely used digital platforms and social media channels to enhance its global visibility. Notable progress has been observed in this regard, with over 200 Shanghai products now available on the destination travel platform GetYourGuide, showcasing a diverse range of experiences, including cycling tours and popular Shanghai breakfast options.

“Shanghai's ongoing efforts to position itself as a premier gateway for inbound tourism are transitioning from showcasing what the city has, to understanding and meeting the desires of international visitors these days,” said Feng Xiang, a researcher at the Shanghai Institute for Global City and director of Shanghai Normal University's Cultural and Tourism Innovation Development Research Center.

Tourism thrives as foreigners flock to smaller cities

By ZHU WENQIAN
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China's inbound tourism market witnessed strong recovery and growth during the just-concluded May Day holiday, with smaller cities drawing numerous foreign visitors looking for cultural experiences, industry insiders said.

During the five-day break, inbound travel bookings surged 130 percent from a year earlier, said Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency. While top-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai remained popular, destinations such as Chengdu in Sichuan province, Chongqing, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, Zhuhai in Guangdong province, and Xi'an in Shaanxi province also made the list of top inbound choices.

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

tion Administration.

Favorable tax refund policies have also boosted inbound travel. In late April, China lowered the tax refund threshold from 500 yuan (\$68.80) to 200 yuan and raised the cash refund limit from 10,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan. There is no limit on refunds processed by bank transfer, according to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Commerce and five other agencies.

“We encourage relevant institutions to provide tax refund services through various means such as mobile payments, bank cards and cash, and to better meet the diverse payment service needs of overseas travelers,” said Sheng Qiuping, vice-minister of commerce, at a recent news conference in Beijing.

During the holiday, tourists from the United States, South Korea and Japan made up the largest share of inbound visitors. The number of travelers from Australia, Vietnam and Canada also rose significantly, according to the Beijing-based travel platform Qunar.

Foreign visitors are venturing beyond major cities. Hotel bookings by foreign tourists in Zhuhai rose 70 percent year-on-year, while Qingdao in Shandong province and Wuhan in Hubei province saw increases of 60 percent and 50 percent during the holiday, respectively, Qunar reported.

China's picturesque landscapes and rich culinary culture have frequently been featured in South Korean TV dramas and variety shows, piquing travel interest. As the May Day holiday coincides with a public holiday in South Korea, droves of young travelers visited China.

South Korea's leading travel agency, Hana Tour, said January trips to China rose 77 percent year-on-year, up from a 120 percent increase for trips to Japan. The surge was mainly driven by China's visa-free policy.

Major South Korean airlines have responded by expanding their international flight offerings to China to meet rising demand.

Meanwhile, more and more for-

ign visitors are seeking immersive cultural experiences in rural areas. A Trip.com resort in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, reported a surge in bookings from tourists from the US, Italy and Spain since April.

“Besides sightseeing, foreign tourists have shown increasing interest in in-depth tours and diverse experiences, such as participating in farming activities and attending ethnic concerts,” said Fang Zexi, a Trip.com Group researcher.

Their cultural curiosity extends into everyday life. In Chengdu, a popular southwestern city, more foreign visitors are booking culinary experiences, visits to local farmers' markets, cooking sessions, table presentations and food tasting, Trip.com said.

In the first three days of the holiday, more than 5,700 inbound passenger trips were recorded by Chengdu's border inspection authority, a year-on-year increase of over 170 percent, according to the Sichuan provincial entry and exit bureau.

Tech: Pact helps build trust in scientific partnerships

From page 1

China's lunar and Mars missions will advance planetary science, and its Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, the world's largest radio telescope, could help enhance astrophysical research. Its human brain project could help in addressing neurodegenerative diseases and brain-computer interfaces.

China is also a major player in sectors such as telecommunications, artificial intelligence and genomics. The renewed agreement provides for a collaborative approach that allows the US to stay engaged in developments that are shaping the future of the global economy. Moreover, apart from its scientific importance, the agreement also helps facilitate people-to-people exchanges, including maintaining trust between long-standing scientific partnerships.

Isolating US researchers from China risks their falling behind in fields where China is taking the lead. China's great success with DeepSeek and its increasingly important role in developing leading-edge pharmaceutical products also reveal the importance of the potential disruptive impact of private sector initiatives in US-China technological competition.

The improvements derived from cooperation are not one-sided. Numerous studies over the past several years have documented qualitative improvements in co-authored scientific papers from both countries.

In the past, the agreement worked as a framework for bilateral discussions on science, technology and related fields such as intellectual property. Effective discussions were held on topics such as national and local-level innovation policies, industry-academic research collaboration, the role of open-source collaboration, measurement of innovation performance, and importance of IP

rights protection. Different from discussions between governments, these innovation-oriented dialogues were often among individuals who had collaborated in pursuing new discoveries and inventions and/or involved people who used the IP system to protect their inventions and discoveries. The meetings attested to the agreement's role in stabilizing personal relationships even when issues were contentious.

Looking forward, the accelerating pace of scientific change should require continuing flexibility by the US and China in addressing emerging scientific and technical challenges and opportunities. Hopefully, the agreement will also adopt and implement useful oversight mechanisms, such as tracking co-authored scientific publications and co-invented patents, and commercialized co-developed technologies that will demonstrate the practical benefits of the agreement.

My hope is that a revised agreement will serve as a model for other countries negotiating science and technology pacts in light of rapidly changing science, technology and regulatory challenges, as well as a reference tool for revising US-China bilateral and private sector discussions on IP and innovation, such as through “Track I diplomacy” — government to government dialogues, or “Track II diplomacy” — dialogues among the private sectors.

Cooperation between the US and China, the two largest science powers in the world, is critical for the well-being of our planet and its people. Managing a balanced, thoughtful and collaborative science and technology agreement will help support a healthy and stable future for all.

The author is a senior technology fellow of the Asia Society of Northern California, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Deadly crash



A mangled minibus taxi can be seen at the spot on Sunday where it collided head on with a pick-up truck at around midnight on Saturday in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Fifteen people were killed and five others injured in the accident.

EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT / HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

Tariffs: EU should forge new forms of collaboration

From page 1

However, legal challenges before the WTO will not produce legally binding rulings because its appellate body, often known as the WTO court, has been nonfunctional since the first Trump administration blocked the appointment of two judges to the court.

Olivier Blanchard and Jean Pisani-Ferry, both senior fellows at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, DC, suggested that EU countries should work with non-EU countries to form international partnerships, or a “coalition of the willing”.

The EU should conduct major trade negotiations with China as “a signal that the EU is not following the US blindly and that much of the world wants to continue to play by reasonable rules,” they said.

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said China and the EU agree on the need to uphold free trade and to abide by WTO rules.

When the US wages trade wars against China and the EU, they

should adopt a more common language and be more rational in handling their differences and expanding their economic and trade ties and collaboration on economic governance, Ding said.

“I hope the EU's China policy will become more pragmatic, rational and mutually beneficial... I also hope the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment can be revived in a way that benefits both sides,” he added.

The European Parliament froze the ratification of the CAI in 2021, following its conclusion in December 2020.

British academic Martin Jacques, a senior fellow at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said European foreign policy has been ceded to the US since the end of World War II.

“I think Europe is going through a process of awakening. It's in a state of shock. Europe is in a very new world now. It's going to adapt to it. It's got no choice,” Jacques said, adding that Europeans need to make trade agreements with other countries and find new areas for their exports and new forms of collaboration.

CHINA

Perilous show

Folk artists perform a stunt requiring participants to climb a ladder made of blades with bare feet during an annual festival held on Monday, the eighth day of the fourth month on the Chinese calendar, in Aizhai township, Hunan province. The festival honors a Miao ethnic hero who fought oppression, and participants pray for a bountiful harvest and a good life. Dressed in festive costumes, Miao people celebrate by putting on various folk performances, attracting many tourists.

GUO LILIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



AI-powered hospitals to offer faster, expanded care

By WEI WANGYU
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A Tsinghua University research team is preparing to roll out a virtual hospital powered by artificial intelligence that could dramatically accelerate medical training and broaden healthcare access, particularly in remote regions and conflict zones.

The AI platform, developed by the Institute for AI Industry Research at Tsinghua, simulates a full hospital environment across 21 clinical departments and is currently undergoing final testing. It is expected to launch to the public later this year.

Early trials conducted by Tairex, a startup incubated by the Tsinghua institute, suggest the platform's AI doctors can diagnose patients more efficiently than human physicians — a development that could help alleviate pressure on China's overburdened healthcare system.

At the core of the system is a time-compression engine that simulates every stage of patient care — from symptom onset to diagnosis, treatment and recovery — at a speed far exceeding real-time. The platform is designed not to replace doctors, but to assist them, especially by reducing their administrative workload.

"We are building AI assistants to reduce doctors' administrative bur-

den," said Liu Yang, executive dean of the research institute. "We want our product to help every patient — especially in remote areas — to have instant access to quality care through their smartphones."

Departments in the virtual hospital were selected based on international medical competency standards, and developers plan to expand the platform to include traditional Chinese medicine.

The initiative has already drawn global interest. Najum Iqbal, communications lead for the Regional Delegation for East Asia of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said AI-powered triage systems could be lifesaving in conflict zones where hospitals may be unsafe or inaccessible.

"An AI hospital is an innovative idea, and it will be interesting to follow how it improves the overall experience of Chinese people in accessing healthcare," Iqbal said. "I hope a successful rollout will help us in the future to use AI in countries affected by armed conflict, where dangers are posed for both patients and medical staff."

Fa Cuiwen, a medical sociologist at Tsinghua, noted that long wait times and complex bureaucracy often discourage Chinese patients from seeking timely care. AI triage systems could handle routine cases remotely, she said, freeing hospital

resources for more urgent needs.

"AI hospitals will be able to assist patients in resource-limited regions by rapidly pinpointing symptoms and accelerating accurate diagnoses," Fa said. "They will save precious time for treatment while reducing financial burdens."

For patients like Kausel Dilmurat, who lives in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and has a chronic illness, AI platforms could fill a critical gap.

"Accessing medical care can be challenging sometimes, and inconsistent recommendations from different hospitals can be frustrating," he said. "If AI-powered healthcare platforms can provide professional guidance, they would offer patients a valuable additional resource for informed decision-making."

Zhang Li, chief representative of the branch in China for the Asia Pacific Medical Technology Association, said the success of medical AI depends on addressing real-world clinical needs and bridging the gap between research and practice.

"China's role as an innovation hub now depends on balancing technological ambition with tangible healthcare outcomes," Zhang said. "The nation's vast public hospital system, which generates rich clinical data, could help transform AI-plus-healthcare systems globally."

Still, Zhang emphasized that

medical AI is a nascent field requiring careful evaluation. "Multifaceted considerations and testing are essential."

According to Liu, the Tsinghua research team has already received international cooperation requests from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Western countries. These partnerships would focus on developing diagnostic modules for specific diseases.

However, Liu said all international collaborations will comply strictly with China's data sovereignty laws.

"Patient data used for AI model training remains anonymized and stored domestically," he said, adding that the team has established cybersecurity and medical ethics review protocols.

The AI diagnostic tools will first be introduced in urban hospitals this year, while rural clinics will gain access via telemedicine services. With China's 5G infrastructure expanding, Liu envisions a future in which "basic healthcare is as accessible as checking the weather forecast."

Liu stressed that AI agents are not designed to replace doctors.

"Our work sets a new benchmark not just for the West, but also for the Global South," he said. "By showing how AI can amplify limited medical resources, we hope to contribute to equitable healthcare innovation worldwide."

Public health system to be enhanced

Revised law on infectious diseases prioritizes surveillance, early warning

By CAO YIN
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Following the adoption of a newly revised law, China will reinforce its public health system to ensure its improved capacity to tackle infectious diseases, especially those of unknown origin, an official from the country's top legislature said.

The amendment to the Law on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases was passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress last week.

Comprising 115 articles across nine chapters, the amended law also marks a significant step forward in safeguarding public welfare and bolstering the nation's disease defense mechanism, said Liang Ying from the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission.

He said the revised law made targeted adjustments to the nation's disease classification while mandating disease control agencies and governments at the grassroots level to strengthen infectious disease prevention.

After the updates, the amended law now categorizes 40 infectious diseases — two as Class A, 27 as Class B and 11 as Class C, according to him.

"Emerging contagious diseases or infectious illnesses of unknown origin must be reported via the country's online direct reporting system," he said while interpreting the revised law, which will take effect on Sept 1.

"If local governments assess the situation and deem it necessary, they can first adopt Class A prevention and control measures," he added.

He highlighted the importance of infectious disease surveillance and early warning systems, noting that the amendment requires the establishment of an epidemic risk assessment mechanism, and also mandates disease control agencies to issue health risk alerts to the public.

Additionally, the amended law places emphasis on strengthening people's livelihood support during

The prevention and control of infectious diseases is crucial to the safety of people's lives and their physical health."

Liang Ying, official of the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission

epidemic control periods, specifying that governments at all levels should provide daily necessities and basic medical services for residents, with special care to key groups to ensure they can receive medical treatment.

Moreover, it also stipulates that grassroots healthcare institutions should set up dedicated divisions or designate staff members responsible for infectious disease prevention and control management, with efforts in relevant talent education and research.

"The prevention and control of infectious diseases is crucial to the safety of people's lives and their physical health, and it's closely related to every family and everyone," he said, urging more people to study and implement the revised law.

China's law on infectious disease prevention and control was first published and took effect in 1989, drawing from experiences in handling the hepatitis outbreak in Shanghai the previous year.

A major round of amendments was made in 2004 after the outbreak of SARS in 2003, and partial revisions were made in 2013.

Responding to new challenges and problems in the sector of public health, the State Council, China's cabinet, proposed revisions to the law in September 2023.

Before the latest review in April and the adoption last week, the NPC Standing Committee reviewed the draft amendment to the law twice, in October 2023 and September 2024.

'Shanghai Solution' yields remarkable recovery

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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A British patient who underwent a world-pioneering procedure for multiple lung cancer nodules at Shanghai East Hospital last month has recovered well, doctors said during his first follow-up visit.

Andrew Car, a 57-year-old car body designer, said he felt "great" with his daily activities and diet back to normal. He expressed confidence in his prognosis.

"I resumed work just five days after receiving the ablation treatment," said Car, who has lived in Shanghai for 11 years. "And after all this process, I've become more confident of the outcome, and I feel that it made perfect sense just to stay in Shanghai for the treatment."

Car was treated using the "Shanghai solution", formally

known as pleuroscopy-assisted early lung cancer ablation, or PAELCA. The procedure was developed at Shanghai East Hospital and has been promoted nationally since 2004.

Li Qiang, director of the hospital's respiratory and critical care medicine department, said Car had more than 10 nodules in both lungs. On March 21, Li's team ablated six nodules in Car's left lung in a four-hour procedure.

"Today's CT scans showed that all six lesions have been completely ablated, with some previously mushroom-like nodules now transformed into solid necrotic tissue," Li said. A similar procedure for Car's right lung is scheduled in a few months.

Li said Car's recovery underscores the advantages of the minimally invasive procedure, which causes less damage to lung func-

tion and quality of life compared to traditional surgery or radiation therapy.

Car's lung nodules were discovered during a routine check-up about six months ago. Given his family history of lung cancer, doctors recommended immediate surgery. But Car said he never considered returning to the United Kingdom for treatment, choosing instead to trust the expertise available in Shanghai.

To tailor the treatment, Li's team modified the traditional ablation approach. Under general anesthesia, a 5-millimeter incision was made between the ribs, and a dual-lumen endotracheal tube was inserted to immobilize the lung, enabling precise targeting of the nodules. Closed thoracic drainage was also performed before the ablation to manage pneumothorax or

bleeding and improve safety.

Car praised the care he received.

"The first time I saw Doctor Li, he instilled in me confidence, and he made an effort to explain the procedure. Moreover, his English is quite good."

PAELCA has also drawn international attention. Li said the procedure was demonstrated to doctors from Southeast Asia and has already been applied in some hospitals there.

Last year, the technique was presented at a global industry conference in Indonesia, generating interest among local professionals. Earlier this year, a livestreaming platform in Singapore was launched, allowing doctors across Southeast Asia to watch the procedure in real time.

Li said he hopes to see the technique adopted in more countries in the future.

Buddha's birthday



A ceremony is held to celebrate the birthday of Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, at the Guangde Temple in Suining, Sichuan province, on Sunday. The Buddha's birthday is celebrated on the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese calendar, which fell on Monday. LIU CHANGSONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Oyster fossils unveil ancient seasonal climate secrets

By YAN DONGJIE
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An international research team led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences has uncovered striking evidence of seasonal temperature swings and glacial cyclic activity during the greenhouse period of Earth's past, offering new insights into today's climate challenges.

The study, published on Saturday in Science Advances, is the first to reconstruct the history of seasonal fluctuations in sea surface temperatures during a greenhouse Earth period, discovering that during the

Early Cretaceous period (139.8-132.9 million years ago), the Earth exhibited significant seasonal temperature variations and periodic melting of polar ice sheets and glaciers.

The findings challenge long-held assumptions about stable, ice-free conditions during prehistoric warm eras, said Ding Lin, an academician from the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research of CAS, who led the study.

In collaboration with institutions in Germany, the United Kingdom and Madagascar, Ding's team analyzed fossilized oyster shells from the Early Cretaceous period and

found that the Earth exhibited significant seasonal temperature variations and periodic melting of polar ice sheets and glaciers.

By examining growth layers in the shells, similar to tree rings, the team reconstructed seasonal sea surface temperatures and identified periodic melting of polar glaciers, even in a world with high-atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration levels.

"Bivalve shells like these oysters are time capsules, bridging Earth's spheres and recording the dance between climate rhythms and ecosystems. They guide us to seek solutions for our future in deep-time

lessons," said Ding, the paper's corresponding author.

The researchers focused on oysters of the genus *Rastellum*, whose shells form distinct light and dark bands corresponding to summer and winter growth. By scanning electron microscopy and geochemical analyses, the team extracted seasonal temperature data.

Climate modeling and clumped isotopes both revealed that winter temperatures in the Southern Hemisphere's mid-latitudes were 10 to 15 C lower than summers during a cooling phase known as the Weisert Event — comparable to modern

seasonal swings, according to the research team.

Oxygen isotope fluctuations also hinted at seasonal glacial meltwater flows into the ocean, similar to today's Greenland ice sheet scenarios, Ding said.

"The Early Cretaceous greenhouse world was like a symphony, with warm main themes occasionally punctuated by short glacial notes," explained He Songlin, the study's first author. The team linked brief glacial pulses to volcanic activity from the Parana-Etendeka eruptions and shifts in Earth's orbit.

Co-corresponding author Wang Tianyang said, "Even in today's warming climate, regional geological events combined with human

actions could trigger unexpected cooling."

The study builds on the team's earlier work, estimating that the volume of Early Cretaceous polar ice reached half of Antarctica's ice sheets today (16.5 million square kilometers).

"This research cracks open a new window into Earth's climate past, revealing hidden rhythms beneath the greenhouse facade," said Andreas Mulch, a co-author from Germany's Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre.

The study, supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China and CAS programs, underscores the urgency of understanding climate complexity to predict future extremes, Ding said.

CHINA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM **Researchers enrich shrimp farming returns**

Sustainable model enables Pacific shrimp to be raised in rugged Ningxia

By **HU DONGMEI** in Yinchuan and **ZHOU HUIYING**

A retired professor from Tsinghua University has revolutionized shrimp farming in Northwest China, developing a sustainable model that uses recycled water to raise Pacific white shrimp in the arid climates of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region.

To diversify the local aquaculture species, farmers in Helan county's Sishilidian village started raising Pacific white shrimp around 2018. However, farmers encountered a series of difficulties, such as low survival rates, difficult wastewater treatment and high equipment maintenance costs.

In the same year, the city's agriculture and rural affairs bureau contacted Duan Yunling, a structural engineer and water treatment expert at Tsinghua University in Beijing, inviting him to help solve the issues.

He spent the next six years developing a model for growing Pacific white shrimp using recycled water.

"Basic water treatment wasn't a challenge for me," said Duan. "The real issue was that, after multiple treatment processes, the income from shrimp farming couldn't cover the costs."

He discovered that due to the lack of a large amount of fresh water inflow, high stocking densities and excessive feeding, traditional pond farming methods would lead to water deterioration over time.

"It not only resulted in low shrimp survival rates but also caused environmental pollution," said Duan.

"As a result, we suggested



From left: Duan Yunling checks water treatment equipment at a Pacific white shrimp farm in Helan county, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. Duan holds a training session on Pacific white shrimp farming in the county. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

switching to small-scale facility farming with water recycling."

According to Duan, compared to traditional open-air pond farming, facility farming has the advantages of lower water usage, controllable temperatures and year-round production.

In late 2018, local enterprises had attempted the method, but failed at the nursery stage.

"I made the decision to stay and solve the challenges of inland shrimp farming," Duan said.

He led a team of seven members, including teachers and students from Tsinghua, to venture into the new research area.

"Although Tsinghua University covers a wide range of interdis-

iplinary fields, it had not yet delved into aquaculture," said Duan. "We began studying the Pacific white shrimp from scratch, and with the support of the university we established a comprehensive experimental platform for facility aquaculture."

However, after three months of hard work, they only harvested about two kilograms of fresh shrimp instead of the expected 50 kg.

Though shrouded in a gloomy atmosphere, the research team identified the key factor affecting water quality — composite biological flocs.

"Similar to natural marine environments, shrimp in recirculated



water farming also require help from bacteria, algae, protozoa and other organic substances," he said.

"The biological flocs cannot only hold shrimp feces and residual feed together using secreted bacteria, which provides essential nutrients for growth, but also purify the water by incorporating ammonia nitrogen into bacterial cells."

They set up a station outside the tank to cultivate the nitrifying bacteria and then put them into the water.

Meanwhile, they combined nitrification, a traditional tool for sewage treatment, with the biological flocs in the pond to eliminate excrement and food residue of the shrimp, creating an ideal

growing environment for them without using antibiotics or toxic chemicals.

In 2020, they achieved a yield of 15 metric tons per hectare, which increased to nearly 22.5 tons per hectare last year, with each shrimp weighing around 64 grams.

Last year, they developed a land-based seawater farming system, which can prompt farmers to perform maintenance based on changes in the values of various bacteria, algae and other organic substances in the water, achieving the intelligent and automated farming of Pacific white shrimp.

"The system can help eliminate manual intervention and be operated completely automatically,

which is easy to promote to more regions, achieving a truly green circular economy," Duan said.

Duan and his team explored a new path for recirculating water farming in the water-scarce villages of northwestern China, and have helped protect valuable environmental resources and increase incomes for local shrimp farmers.

"Scientific research should be used to enhance social productivity and increase people's incomes," he said.

"I hope that more scientific research talent can join our shrimp farming team."

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Driver always ready to deliver life-saving care

By **ZHOU LIHUA**, **LIU KUN** in Wuhan and **PENG CHAO**

Delivery driver Zhang Baojian's electric bike carries two boxes, one for meals and the other for emergencies, which he used to save a senior woman's life last month.

Zhang, 34, an employee of food delivery platform Ele.me in Wuhan, Hubei province, was delivering an order on March 25 when he encountered a 70-year-old woman who had been hit by a car.

Lying face down with her head bleeding, the senior victim had fallen unconscious. Zhang immediately pulled over and rushed to administer first aid.

"I've received first-aid training. At that moment, I rushed to help without hesitation, because all that mattered was saving her life," he said.

Zhang tapped her shoulders and placed his fingers near her nose, detecting only faint breathing. Fearing she might choke, he used his hands to clear foam from her mouth.

When the ambulance arrived, Zhang helped paramedics lift her into the vehicle.

As the woman's injuries were severe, doctors needed to notify her family but had no contact information. Zhang found the woman's identification card in her purse and immediately rode his e-bike to the address on the card. There, he found the woman's daughter, surnamed Liang, and accompanied her to the hospital.

Zhang left the hospital after handing over the woman's personal belongings to Liang.

To express her gratitude, Liang transferred him 888 yuan (\$121) through WeChat. But Zhang firmly declined the offer and said, "I didn't help for money — I simply did what I should do."

Zhang, originally from Huludao, Liaoning province, moved to Wuhan in 2011 after retiring from the army.

He worked as a security guard and engaged in fruit transport before joining the food delivery industry in 2019. Over the years, he didn't buy a car or an apartment like most people would, but



Zhang Baojian rides on his electric bike in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

devoted himself to public welfare. "Those two years in the army taught me resilience, responsibility and duty," said Zhang. "A soldier's commitment doesn't end with service — whenever people need help, we must step forward."

As he rides through streets and alleys every day, Zhang frequently

encounters injured or sick people. To provide timely assistance, he learned first-aid skills and earned the Red Cross first aid instructor certificate and the American Heart Association Heartsaver certificate.

Over the past six years, he has aided over 100 people with his first-aid kit.

Upon learning of Zhang's rescue of the elderly woman, Ele.me awarded him the title "Community Hero" along with a 10,000-yuan cash reward.

Hu Xiaoyong, general manager of Ele.me's Hubei logistics division, said the delivery platform has established a liability exemption to encourage riders to assist in emergency situations within their capabilities while ensuring their own safety.

"If riders have to delay their deliveries or receive complaints due to good deeds in handling emergencies, we will exempt them from penalties," he said.

In addition to Ele.me's reward, Alibaba Philanthropy also awarded Zhang 5,000 yuan. Zhang said he plans to contribute all the money for public welfare causes.

"As for the future, my goal is simple: to teach more delivery riders first-aid skills," he said.

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Runner carries hope for reunited families

YINCHUAN — For nearly a year, marathon runner Ma Shuai has turned races into platforms for hope, rallying athletes across the country to wear posters of missing children on their backs during competitions.

His grassroots campaign, Marathon for Missing Children, has already helped reunite families that had been separated for decades.

Ma's journey began with a haunting encounter years ago with a mother whose 15-year-old daughter, Du Sisi, vanished after school, leaving her deep in grief.

"Du Sisi is my age, yet they've been apart for years. It shattered me," Ma recalled.

Inspired by families who never moved or gave up searching despite fading hope, Ma saw marathons, which attract massive crowds and media attention, as untapped tools for raising awareness.

At a 2024 race in Wuzhong, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Ma pinned his first missing-child poster to his jersey. The campaign quickly gained momentum: thousands of runners have

since joined him, wearing customized shirts with names, photos and contact information for missing children.

The movement had a breakthrough this January. At the Guangzhou Marathon in Guangdong province, a man who was separated from his family at age 4 recognized childhood details on a runner's poster.

After 26 years, he was reunited with his family — a tearful moment Ma calls his "proudest finish line."

Skeptics have accused Ma of using tragedy for attention, but he brushes it off.

"This isn't a sprint. It's a marathon," he said. "Doubters fade, but families never stop running."

Ma later headed to Yangling Marathon in Shaanxi province, distributing posters to new volunteers.

Each race fuels his resolve, he said.

"These parents endure a lifetime of marathons. If our miles can shave years off their wait, we'll keep running."

XINHUA

Chinese doctors provide smiles to children born with cleft lip in Tanzania

DAR ES SALAAM — The 34th Chinese medical team in Tanzania recently completed five cleft lip surgeries and 19 cleft palate surgeries on children within just five days — each procedure carried out without complications — restoring health and granting the children the gift of smiles.

The surgeries were part of a five-day "Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery Week", themed "Smile Journey", organized by the Chinese medical team to improve health outcomes, share medical expertise and strengthen cooperation with Tanzanian counterparts.

Among the young patients was Ibrahim Abdunnassir Ramadhan, a 1-year-old boy from the island of Zanzibar. Born with a cleft lip,

Ramadhan faced difficulties feeding and frequently cried due to discomfort. His parents had been desperately seeking help but feared they could never afford the treatment.

"When I first held him, I cried. Not because of his condition, but because I feared the world would not be kind to him," said his mother, Raya Rashid Omar. "People stared. Some even told me to hide him. I didn't want him, I just wanted help."

Their hopes turned into reality when they learned about "Smile Journey". After an initial screening, the baby was selected for surgery at Lumumba Regional Hospital.

"I was nervous. He's so small,"

“You didn't just fix a lip. You gave him a chance to face the world with confidence. That's a gift we'll never forget.”

Sumaiya, medical worker from Lumumba Regional Hospital in Tanzania

said his father, Abdunnassir Ramadhan Suleiman, as he watched the medical team carry his son into the operating room.

"But the doctors looked at him

the way we do. They saw a child who deserves a future."

Led by surgeon Fang Jin, the operation proceeded smoothly. Fang worked alongside three Tanzanian doctors from the capital, Dodoma. Together, they formed a well-coordinated professional team.

Throughout the intense five-day period, the team worked seamlessly, performing each surgery with precision and care. Post-operation, they conducted daily check-ups to monitor recovery and ensure the best possible outcomes.

When Ramadhan awoke from surgery, his parents could not contain their emotions.

"For the first time, I saw his smile without pain," the mother said, hold-

ing back tears. "He looked like he had always been waiting to become this version of himself."

The transformation moved not only the medical staff but also the volunteers at Lumumba hospital. Many children, once shy or silent, began playing and laughing freely with their newly healed faces.

Fang recalled the moment when the mother grasped his hand tightly after the procedure. "She didn't say much. Just 'Chinese doctor, thank you.' But her eyes said everything," he said.

Local medical professionals also reflected on the experience.

"This collaboration with the Chinese team has been eye-opening. We not only learned advanced techniques but saw what compas-

sion looks like in practice," said Seseja, one of the three Tanzanian doctors.

Sumaiya from Lumumba hospital's dental department said: "Chinese doctors brought not only expertise but also trust and hope. This cross-border goodwill is truly touching."

By the end of the week, 24 children had received transformative procedures. For families like Ramadhan's, the impact extended beyond medical treatment.

"You didn't just fix a lip," said Suleiman, looking at his son asleep in his arms. "You gave him a chance to face the world with confidence. That's a gift we'll never forget."

XINHUA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

Editor's note: China Daily's publishing services illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

By ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin,
LIU KUN in Wuhan
and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

Several major grain-producing regions have been proactively leveraging their abundant agricultural and forestry residues to aid the low-carbon transition, converting waste into renewable energy and organic fertilizers.

As the country's largest grain-producing region, Heilongjiang province in Northeast China is developing its bioeconomy, with a focus on producing biogas, according to the Heilongjiang Development and Reform Commission.

In response to inquiries from China Daily, the commission highlighted the significant potential of Heilongjiang in developing biomass energy by utilizing its abundant resources of straw, forestry waste, livestock and poultry manure.

According to the commission, the province produces around 90 million metric tons of straw annually, with a potential collection rate of nearly 86 percent. The province's 20 million hectares of forests are estimated to create 9.6 million tons of waste each year. The province's substantial livestock and poultry industry also serves as a reliable, consistent source for biomass energy production, generating 90 million tons of manure annually, it added.

Recognizing the ample available resources, Heilongjiang has identified biogas as a key emerging sector in the development of renewable energy, and has rolled out a slate of measures to maximize its potential.

In 2022, the province unveiled an action plan, pledging to transform the region into a model demonstration base for large-scale biogas development in China's cold north.

According to the plan, Heilongjiang aims to gradually develop mature biogas production technologies suited to the climate characteristics of northern regions by the end of this year, with a series of large-scale biogas demonstration projects completed and put into operation.

By fully utilizing waste from the agriculture, forestry and livestock sectors, the province expects the biogas industry to thrive and become a key emerging sector for renewable energy.

Heilongjiang has encouraged its major livestock farming counties and grain-producing areas to integrate the harmless treatment of livestock and poultry manure with the comprehensive utilization of straw for biogas demonstration projects.

The commission highlighted the establishment of a complete biogas industrial chain as a priority in its work regarding biogas development.

Aside from accelerating the development of key biogas-producing technologies tailored for cold regions like Heilongjiang, the province has also intensified efforts to establish comprehensive systems for raw material collection and biogas consumption, the commission said.

While it provides a much greener alternative for export-oriented enterprises that consume natural gas, biogas has been integrated into urban natural gas networks and is also used for electricity generation and the production of green methanol.

To date, seven biogas production projects have been put into operation in Heilongjiang, the combined annual capacity of which has reached roughly 50 million cubic meters, the commission said. Another six projects



Left: A worker spreads out straw for drying in Yiyang, Hunan province, in December. The county turns 90 percent of its straw into livestock and fish feed, as well as biofuel. CHEN SIHAN / XINHUA Right: Workers operate an agricultural machine to arrange bales of straw to be used to make biofuel for winter heating in Nenjiang, Heilongjiang province, in October. LIN JINCHUN / XINHUA



Farm waste turned into biofuel produces healthy profit

Transformation of recycled straw contributes to green transition in grain-growing provinces



A machine packs and bales up straw from a rice field for further use in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, in October. YANG HAIQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

with a total annual production capacity of 28 million cubic meters are still under construction.

Once the six projects are completed, the biogas-producing facilities in the province will be able to annually consume 640,000 tons of straw and harmlessly treat 1 million tons of livestock and poultry manure, it said.

The commission said Heilongjiang already boasts several key enterprises with proprietary technologies for biogas production, including Heilongjiang Boneng Green Energy Technology Co.

Boneng plans to establish 30 centers utilizing its dry anaerobic fermentation technology to produce biogas by 2028, according to Shi Hongying, the company's general manager. Each of the centers will have an annual capacity to dispose of

70,000 to 100,000 tons of livestock and poultry manure and 30,000 to 50,000 tons of straw, outputting 4 million cubic meters of biogas.

Shi noted the company's remarkable progress in implementing the plan, saying that 12 of the centers are either already operational or under construction, with another eight in the planning stages.

Shi emphasized that the company's technology creates substantial climate and economic benefits.

Adaptable to the low-temperature environments of cold northern regions, the technology enables continuous production throughout the year in Heilongjiang, she noted.

Using biogas as a raw material, the company also produces bio-methanol through chemical synthesis. "Both the company's biogas and bio-methanol

products received the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification for the EU (ISCC EU) in 2024, making it the first green new energy company in China to attain this certification," she said.

Methanol, a key raw material in the chemical industry, is a chemical building block for hundreds of everyday products, including plastics, paints, car parts and construction materials. However, it is currently mainly derived from fossil fuels.

The manager said the residue from the company's biogas production process will be made into organic fertilizer or artificial black soil, which can be used for soil improvement.

Once operational, the company's 30 centers will be able to annually process 2.1 million tons of manure and 1.5 million tons of straw, she said.

In addition to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 3 million tons per year, the company will also capture 180,000 tons of greenhouse gases for industrial use.

Each of the centers can generate an annual revenue of 15 to 18 million yuan (\$2.1 to 2.5 million) from producing biogas, based on a natural gas price of 3.8 to 4.5 yuan per cubic meter, she said.

"In recent years, the government has been promoting a shift in energy consumption from coal to natural gas, and the relatively stable price of natural gas has ensured consistent revenue," Shi said.

As one of the 13 major grain-producing regions in China, Hubei province has also been forging ahead with the utilization of waste from its agricultural and livestock sectors for pro-

ducing biogas and organic fertilizers.

According to the office of the province's leading group for rural energy development, Hubei will allocate 50 million yuan in special funds this year to support 50 villages in areas with well-developed farming and livestock industries to carry out demonstration projects.

In a statement provided to China Daily, the office stressed the initiative as a potential solution to simultaneously address pollution from farming and promote clean energy production. Every year, roughly 38 million tons of straw is generated in Hubei's agricultural sector, and large-scale animal farming operations across the province produce over 72 million tons of manure, it said.

The initiative this year will promote an operation mode that features renewable energy generation, circular economy and industrial development, the office added.

In addition to implementing biogas facilities customized to local conditions, it said the initiative will establish supporting infrastructure to enable the use of by-products from biogas production such as organic fertilizers, promoting the cultivation of organic and pollution-free agricultural and forestry products.

The office also highlighted additional strategies that will be tapped to increase rural incomes, such as selling organic fertilizers and the trading of carbon credits.

The statement outlined plans to introduce a biogas-fueled electricity generation program in these demonstration villages to boost the consumption of renewable energy in agricultural production and rural living.

Even before the demonstration projects this year, in 2017 Hubei rolled out pilot programs in 18 counties for comprehensive utilization of agricultural waste.

That year, Hubei Green Energy Eco-Tech Co launched a demonstration industrial park for large-scale biogas development in Yicheng county's Liushui township, the largest watermelon-producing area in Hubei.

The park processes livestock and poultry manure, straw and spoiled fruits and vegetables to generate biogas and make organic fertilizers.

Shen Xueli, an executive at the company, said the initiative aims to effectively tackle agricultural pollution while promoting the development of ecological circular agriculture.

The park has the potential to dispose of some 5,000 tons of different types of waste annually, producing roughly 60,000 tons of solid and liquid organic fertilizers, most of which could be supplied to nearby orchards.

Aside from the environmental benefits, the utilization of agricultural waste comes with economic gains for local residents. Liu Chuanhua, a resident in the township whose family of six depend on farming for a living, is keenly aware of that.

Previously, a large amount of rice straw was left on the farm after the harvest season. As the straw is slow to rot, it posed challenges for the plow work, the 60-year-old said. Now, however, straw balers are used to band the straw for selling, with the prices ranging from 350 to 600 yuan per ton.

"Before, straw left in the fields was just waste. Now, it's collected and turned into money," he said.

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Shandong facility gets the most out of old NEV batteries

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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At a battery recycling facility in Hedong district of Linyi, Shandong province, the used batteries from new energy vehicles are processed into lithium, copper and aluminum powder in just over 10 minutes. This project, initiated at the end of last year, aims to transform old batteries into valuable resources.

As China steers toward a carbon dioxide peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060, the new energy vehicle sector faces a rapid expansion. However, the recycling of used batteries, laden with heavy metals and environmental risks, presents a crucial challenge.

"In our city, new energy vehicles accounted for nearly half of all car sales last year, with a rapid growth of 40 percent, indicating the battery recycling facility in the district has a

big market potential," said Sun Quancheng, a senior official of Hedong district.

The facility incorporates a sophisticated four-stage crushing process and three rounds of grinding and sorting into separate battery casings, black powder, copper powder and aluminum powder. Notably, it achieves a recycling rate that surpasses the industry average by 5 percentage points.

Cui Guoshi, the deputy general manager of Shandong Taigu Jiantou New Materials Co, which operates the facility, likens the final sorting process to "winnowing wheat," where heavier copper and aluminum particles settle while lighter battery powder is carried upward by airflow.

"This meticulous sorting results in a battery powder with less than one percent copper and aluminum content, enhancing its quality for reuse," said Cui.

The extracted battery powder contains nickel, cobalt and lithium — critical components for lithium-ion batteries.

"After further refinement by hydrometallurgical technology, these metals like nickel and cobalt can be reused in producing new batteries," said Xia Mingyuan, the company's general manager.

Traditional battery recycling methods require at least seven days of discharge treatment before crushing — a process prone to creating pollution.

To address this, the facility in Hedong district has developed an innovative system that crushes charged batteries safely by using nitrogen protection and instant pyrolysis, making recycling faster and cleaner.

Wang Delong, another deputy general manager at the company, said that the facility's system continuous-

ly injects nitrogen into the processing equipment, with sensors automatically adjusting levels to maintain oxygen concentration below 5 percent. "This effectively prevents battery combustion," he said.

Although retired EV batteries often retain 70-80 percent of their capacity, enabling secondary uses like electric tricycles and tools, their ultimate dismantling and recycling are imperative.

"Previously, these batteries in Shandong had to be transported to recycling facilities in southern China for crushing and reprocessing, incurring substantial costs and safety risks during transit," said Yang Yang, deputy secretary-general of the Shandong power battery recycling association.

Bolstered by robust local government support, the project was integrated into Shandong's green, low-carbon, high-quality development



An engineer inspects machinery at a factory that recycles new energy vehicle batteries in Linyi, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

agenda, facilitating swift approval and production within a mere three months in Linyi.

Plans are underway to introduce five additional production lines for future expansion alongside the existing operational dry-process line.

Upon reaching full capacity, the project is poised to annually recycle 40,000 metric tons of lithium batteries, setting a benchmark for sustainable battery management in alignment with China's green transition.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

WORLD

Germany's far-right hits back at 'extremist' label

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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The far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, the second-largest party in the country's parliament, the Bundestag, has begun legal proceedings against Germany's domestic intelligence agency after it labeled the populist anti-immigrant party an extremist organization.

In a statement issued last week, it said the AfD, which won 20.8 percent of votes in February's election, behind the winning Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union, or CDU-CSU, which took 28.6 percent, "aims to exclude certain population groups from equal participation in society".

Specifically, the statement went on to say, that it did not consider citizens "from predominantly Muslim countries" as equal members of the German nation.

A spokesman for the AfD told the AFP that the party had lodged a court challenge against the designation on Monday.

Earlier in the year, United States President Donald Trump's close associate Elon Musk held an online livestreamed discussion with Alice Weidel, co-chair of the AfD, urging people to vote for the AfD, and she also met US Vice-President JD Vance in the run-up to February's election.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the resignation of the party, which means it could face greater monitoring through techniques such as telephone interception and the use of undercover agents, "tyranny in disguise".

But Germany's Federal Foreign Office hit back on social media, say-

ing it was "democracy", and that the decision was "the result of a thorough and independent investigation to protect our constitution and the rule of law ... we have learned from our history that right-wing extremism needs to be stopped".

There have even been suggestions that the AfD, whose support is mainly in the territories of the former East Germany, should be banned, which party leaders said would be a "blow against democracy", and an attempt to disfranchise the millions of people who voted for it this year.

According to a survey conducted by the polling institute INSA for the newspaper Bild am Sonntag from Friday to Saturday, 61 percent of the 1,001 surveyed people agreed with the categorization of the AfD as a "confirmed right-wing extremist endeavor", with 48 percent supporting a ban.

Germany's center-left Social Democrats leader Lars Klingbeil, who will be finance minister in the new coalition government, took a cautious approach to the prospect of an outright ban. "I'm not interested in producing quick headlines from this assessment," he told the newspaper Bild, in response to the extremist designation. "But if the authorities at some point issue a clear mandate to act, then the political sphere must evaluate that carefully."

Mika Beuster, federal chair of the German Journalists' Association, said the new status should be considered during news coverage.

"Of course we must continue reporting on the AfD," he said. "But it is not a normal party within the democratic spectrum. It requires an adapted approach."

Muddy dash



Competitors take part in the annual Maldon Mud Race on Sunday in Maldon, England. Originating in 1973, the mud race consists of a 500-meter dash across the River Blackwater at low tide, often in fancy dress. CARL COURT / GETTY IMAGES

Zelensky says 'ceasefire possible any moment'

PRAGUE/MOSCOW — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday that a ceasefire with Russia in its more than three-year-old fighting was possible at any moment and called on Kyiv's allies to apply greater pressure on Moscow to put the measure in place.

Zelensky, at a joint news conference in Prague alongside Czech Republic's President Petr Pavel, also called its allies to increase pressure on Moscow.

"We believe that a ceasefire is possible at any moment, even starting today, and should last at least 30 days to give diplomacy a real chance."

Putin last week declared a three-day ceasefire over May 8-10 to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and its allies over Nazi Germany in World War II.

Zelensky said such a measure is pointless and called instead for an unconditional ceasefire over at least 30 days in line with a US proposal launched in March.

The Czech government has been a strong backer of Kyiv since Russia started its military operation in Ukraine in 2022, and has led an initiative to supply Ukraine with large-caliber ammunition.

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he and his advisers have had some good discussions about Russia and Ukraine in recent days, without elaborating.

Speaking to reporters as he returned to the White House after a

weekend in Florida, Trump was asked whether he planned to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Saudi Arabia when he travels there later this month.

He said he had not thought about this but "we've had some very good discussions" about Russia and Ukraine in recent days.

The Kremlin on Monday said that a meeting was necessary but that Putin had no trips to the Middle East planned for mid-May.

Putin has said the need to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine has not arisen and that he hopes it will not.

In comments aired on Sunday in a film by Russian state television, Putin said Russia has the strength and the means to bring the conflict in Ukraine to a "logical conclusion".

Responding to a question about Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory, Putin said: "There has been no need to use those (nuclear) weapons."

Putin said that reconciliation with Ukraine was "inevitable".

On the battlefield, both sides claimed advances.

Ukraine's air defense units shot down 42 of 116 drones launched by Russia in an overnight attack that hit the regions of Sumy and Donetsk, the military said on Monday.

Russia's air defense systems destroyed 26 Ukrainian drones overnight, TASS news agency reported on Monday, citing Russia's defense ministry data.



Palestinians throw stones at an Israeli security forces vehicle during clashes that erupted following an army raid in the West Bank city of Nablus on Sunday. MAJDI MOHAMMED / AP

Houthis blame US for strikes in Yemen

Israel vows revenge for airport attack as cabinet OKs new Gaza military plan

TEL AVIV/GAZA — Yemen's Houthi militia on Monday blamed Washington for around 10 strikes in and about the capital Sanaa after a missile fired by the group struck the area of Israel's main airport.

The Houthi-run Saba news agency said the strikes included two targeting Arbaeen Street in the capital as well as one on the airport road, blaming them on "American aggression".

The group's health ministry said 14 people were wounded in the Sanaa neighborhood, according to Saba.

The missile fired from Yemen by the Houthis landed near the main terminal of Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday, wounding six people.

The military confirmed that the attack, which gouged a large crater in the perimeter of the airport, had struck despite "several attempts ... to intercept the missile".

In a video published on Telegram, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel had in the past "acted against" the group and "will act in the future".

"It will not happen in one bang, but there will be many bangs," he added, without elaborating.

Later on X, Netanyahu said Israel would also respond to Iran as he saw the attack was Iran-backed, at "a time and place of our choosing".

Iran on Monday rejected accusations of its involvement in attacks on Israel by the Houthis.

In a statement released early on Monday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry described the repetition of such "baseless" claims as an "affront to the powerful but oppressed" Yemeni nation.

The statement highlighted Iran's position on the necessity to respect countries' territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and condemned US military attacks on Yemen as a "flagrant violation" of the UN Charter and international law.

On Sunday, several international airlines suspended flights to Israel following the attack, and hours later the Houthis promised more such strikes and warned airlines to cancel their flights to Israeli airports.

A police video showed officers standing on the edge of a deep hole in the ground with a control tower visible behind them. No damage was reported to airport infrastructure.

An AFP photographer said the missile hit near the parking lots of Terminal 3, the airport's largest.

The Houthis, who control swathes of Yemen, have launched missiles and drones targeting Israel and Red Sea shipping throughout the Gaza conflict.

US strikes on the group began under former president Joe Biden, but have intensified under his successor Donald Trump.

Truce deadlock

Israel resumed major operations across Gaza on March 18 amid a deadlock over how to proceed with a two-month ceasefire that had largely stopped the fighting.

Israel's security cabinet approved a plan to expand military operations in Gaza, including the "conquest" of the Palestinian territory and a push for its residents to leave, an official said on Monday.

The decision, made overnight,

came hours after the military announced it was calling up tens of thousands of reservists to expand its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

"The plan will include, among other things, the conquest of the Gaza Strip and the holding of the territories, moving the Gaza population south for their protection," the official said.

An Israeli campaign group said the new plan for expanded military operations in Gaza is "sacrificing" hostages held in the Palestinian territory.

"The plan approved by the cabinet deserves to be called the 'Smotrich-Netanyahu Plan' for sacrificing the hostages," the Hostages and Missing Families Forum said of the plan adopted by Israel's security cabinet. Bezalel Smotrich is Israel's foreign minister.

In the West Bank, the Israeli military has been carrying out an operation in the West Bank over the past several months that displaced, at its height, about 40,000 Palestinians.

It had emptied and largely destroyed several urban refugee camps in the northern West Bank, such as Tulkarem and Nur Shams, that housed the descendants of Palestinians who fled or were driven from their homes in previous wars.

In a latest move, Israeli forces prepared to carry out home demolitions across two northern urban refugee camps, according to the governor of one of the camps and Israeli military documents shared with The Associated Press by the United Nations. The decision triggered widespread criticism in the West Bank.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Briefly

UNITED STATES

1 dead after 16 people shot at party in Texas

Sixteen people were shot and at least one was killed on Sunday during a large party at a home in Houston, where police said gunfire broke out after an uninvited guest was asked to leave. An 18-year-old man was pronounced dead at the hospital, and the injured ranged in age from 16 to 40, the Houston Police Department said in a statement on Sunday evening. No suspect is currently in custody, though several people were detained, questioned and then released.

BRAZIL

Police foil plot to bomb concert

Brazilian police said on Sunday they had thwarted a bomb attack planned for Lady Gaga's concert that drew over 2 million people to Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday. The Civil Police of Rio de Janeiro state, working in coordination with the Justice Ministry, said the plot was orchestrated by a group promoting hate speech and the radicalization of teenagers, including self-harm and violent content as a form of social belonging. According to Rio de Janeiro's City Hall, 2.1 million people attended the concert.

PAKISTAN

Military conducts second missile test

The Pakistan military said on Monday it had conducted a missile test with a range of 120 kilometers, the second launch in two days as tensions with India have soared recently. "The launch was aimed at ensuring the operational readiness of troops and validating key technical parameters, including the missile's advanced navigation system and enhanced accuracy," the military said in a statement. On Saturday, the military said it had tested a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 450 kilometers. It did not say where either of the tests took place. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was satisfied with the military's "full preparedness for national defense".

GERMANY

Government set to rule as pact signed

The conservatives of Germany's designated Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the center-left Social Democrats formally signed their coalition deal on Monday, on the eve of launching their new government. Merz, 69, is on Tuesday set to be sworn in as the new leader of Europe's biggest economy, ending half a year of political paralysis in Berlin. The 144-page coalition contract titled "Responsibility for Germany" lays out a policy road map for the next four years for the coalition of the country's two traditional big-tent parties.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Romanian presidential election goes into a runoff

BUCHAREST — George Simion, chairman of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians, and Bucharest Mayor Nicusor Dan will advance to the runoff of Romania's presidential election rerun, scheduled for May 18.

The announcement follows real-time preliminary results by Romania's Permanent Electoral Authority from the first round of the elections rerun on Sunday.

With over 99.53 percent of ballots counted, Simion maintains a commanding lead with 40.56 percent of the vote.

Dan, who ran as an independent, was in second place with 20.91 percent. Close behind was Crin Antonescu, the candidate of the electoral alliance Romania Forward, with 20.32 percent.

Romania's president serves a five-year term, with a maximum of two consecutive terms allowed.

Under the Romanian Constitution, if no candidate secures an

outright majority in the first round, a runoff is held between the top two contenders two weeks later.

The presidential election held in November was annulled following allegations of irregular campaigning practices and foreign interference.

"This is not just an electoral victory, it is a victory of Romanian dignity. It is the victory of those who have not lost hope, of those who still believe in Romania, a free, respected, sovereign country," Simion, a 38-year-old eurosceptic, said.

He secured victory in 36 out of Romania's 47 electoral districts, showing strong domestic support. He also captured 61 percent of the diaspora vote while Dan managed 25 percent despite securing wins in 68 out of 94 countries where votes were cast. Ballots from one overseas station were still being awaited but would have no bearing on the overall outcome.



A child helps his father cast his ballot at a polling station on Sunday during the first round of the presidential elections in Romania. MIHAI BARBU / AFP

Simion opposes military aid to neighboring Ukraine, and is critical of the EU leadership.

After confirming his runner-up status, Dan expressed gratitude to his supporters — especially those in Moldova, where his camp secured over 50 percent — and outlined his challenge against an isolationist candidate.

"A difficult second round is going to follow with the isolationist candidate. It will not be a debate between individuals, it will be a debate between a pro-Western direction for Romania and an anti-Western direction for Romania," he said.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

BUSINESS

Received by NSD/EARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM



A property agent (center) introduces a residential project in Qingzhou, Shandong province.

WANG JILIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Property moves to get house in better order

Real estate in big cities showing more stabilizing signs after gradual declines

By WANG YING

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In a tone-setting conference, China's policymakers outlined specific property measures focused on risk prevention, stock optimization and supply improvement, which is key to the stable and healthy development of the real estate sector, said industry experts on Sunday.

Being an important pillar of the nation's economy, the property market is closely associated with overall economic performance, including financial policies and capital markets. Therefore, bolstering real estate market stability calls for consistent efforts and further supportive measures, they said.

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a meeting to analyze and study the current economic situation and overall economic work on April 25.

The meeting affirmed the positive changes observed in the real estate sector over the past two quarters. Thanks to a series of supportive housing policies, property sales, prices and land markets in major cities have shown signs of stabilizing after a period of gradual decline, laying a solid foundation for further recovery.

Two major strategic directions were highlighted — intensifying urban renewal initiatives, including the orderly advancement of urban villages and dilapidated housing renovations, and accelerating the establishment of a new real estate development model.

"The meeting further stressed the significance of urban regeneration, and urged greater efforts to promote the renovation of urban villages and dilapidated houses," said Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the Shanghai-based E-House China R&D Institute.

"This is also one of the key tasks for the year, as the renovation of urban villages would not only improve people's living environments, but also

activate more market demand," Yan said.

The meeting also highlighted that efforts should be made to establish a new model of property development at an accelerated pace, increase the supply of high-quality housing, optimize the purchase policy of existing commercial housing and continue to consolidate the stability of the market.

"It is evident that the meeting mentioned the positive changes seen in the real estate market in the past two quarters," said Ma Hong, a senior researcher from Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"Boosted by a series of supportive measures, the downward tendencies in sales, home prices and land have been checked, laying a solid foundation for market recovery. There will be great demand for high-quality housing as the nation's urbanization continues, which means that there is still room for further growth in the property sector," said Ma.

Chen Wenjing, director of research at the China Index Academy, said she was encouraged by the major meeting's spirit in further consolidating property market stabilization.

"The conference has prioritized the establishment of a new real estate development pattern, which will have a positive impact on the stable and healthy development of the property market over the mid to long-term," Chen said.

"We see a lot more policies to facilitate the creation of the new model and optimize the purchase of existing commercial housing in the pipeline, and tailored policies would be introduced in a timely manner according to the market's status quo," she added.

Since the beginning of the year, quite a few cities have released housing vouchers in relocation projects to stimulate buying sentiment, with more than 20 regions having optimized their housing voucher measures. These efforts are expect-

ed to integrate the new home and pre-owned market, as well as reduce market inventories.

Notably, the meeting for the first time called for "increasing the supply of high-quality housing", which is expected to promote the property market's transition from quantity to quality as a new driver for the sector's future development, experts said.

"The real estate market is entering a new phase, where the focus is shifting from rapid construction and volume to improving housing quality and meeting evolving buyer expectations," said Lu Wenxi, a market analyst with Centaline Shanghai.

Lu said consumers are now placing greater emphasis on location, property quality and affordability. Striking a balance between these factors has become essential for developers aiming to stay competitive in a changing market.

"As the market continues to evolve, developers who prioritize quality and tailor their products to meet these shifting demands are expected to find more opportunities," Lu added.

"The policymakers' call for higher-quality homes is already having an impact on consumer expectations, and it will further have an influence on market transactions over the mid to long-term," said Xu Wei, a senior agent with Sinyi Realty in Shanghai.

Xu, a veteran in the realty brokerage business for 16 years, said finding high-quality homes within limited budgets has become a top priority for current homebuyers.

"Currently, the bestsellers in our region are quality school district homes, pre-owned apartments that are comparatively new and high-end residential properties with better quality," Xu added.

It is widely believed that more cities are expected to introduce standards and regulations to support the construction of high-quality residences, leading to a notable increase in the supply of "good housing".

Steps to boost private energy economy

By ZHENG XIN

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The National Energy Administration released new measures recently aimed at significantly accelerating private sector investment and participation across the energy sector, including major projects like nuclear power, oil and gas infrastructure.

The measures are designed to promote quick development of the private energy economy and guide it to become larger, better, and stronger in advancing the green and low-carbon energy transition and building a new energy system, the NEA said.

Under the guidelines, private enterprises will be supported to take stakes in nuclear power projects and invest in major energy projects such as hydropower, oil and gas storage facilities, and oil and gas pipelines.

Xu Xin, deputy director of the NEA's department of legal and institutional reform, said the administration will further support private investment in energy infrastructure, including innovative technologies and models such as new energy storage, virtual power plants, charging infrastructure, and smart microgrids.

She added that the NEA encourages innovation, supporting deep private sector involvement in major energy technology innovation, collaborative research and results sharing.

The measures also back digital and intelligent upgrades for private firms, the development of "AI+" applications, and the cultivation of

advanced technologies and business models for energy equipment recycling, Xu said during a news conference in Beijing.

This policy underscores Beijing's intent to leverage private sector dynamism and funding to accelerate the energy transition and boost innovation in areas like storage and smart grids, according to industry experts.

The move could unlock substantial new investment and introduce greater market efficiency into China's vast energy landscape, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

The State Council approved recently the construction of 10 new reactors with a combined investment exceeding 200 billion yuan (\$27.4 billion), including Phase III of the Sanmen Nuclear Power Plant in East China's Zhejiang province, introducing private enterprises with shareholdings exceeding 10 percent.

This represents a notable increase from earlier instances of private participation in nuclear projects, such as the Zhejiang San'ao nuclear power projects approved in 2020, where the private enterprise took a 2 percent stake.

Nuclear power has historically been dominated by State-owned enterprises due to its strategic importance and high entry barriers and the increase in private sector stakeholding to 10 percent in recently approved projects marks a significant policy shift aimed at attracting private capital and accelerating development in this strategic sector.

In China, private companies are already major players in certain energy sub-sectors after years of development. In the charging infrastructure market, for example, private enterprises accounted for over 80 percent of large operators (those managing over 10,000 charging units) by the end of 2024, according to the NEA.

Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL (Group) Holdings Co Ltd, China's largest private power conglomerate, said the involvement of private firms is expected to spur greater technological advancement and operational efficiency in the energy sector, leading to improved competitiveness and sustainability.

"A more market-driven energy sector would enhance the efficiency of resource allocation," he said.

He cited China's solar power sector, from silicon production to building power stations, as a prime example of the private economy's growing influence in the country's energy transformation.

Building a new energy system is seen as a technology and innovation-driven transformation. Many private enterprises are already deeply involved in national science and technology programs covering areas like smart grids, energy storage, hydrogen, renewable energy, and clean coal utilization, said Xu.

Xu said that the new measures are expected to help create new investment growth points in the energy sector and make the private economy an indispensable force in the low-carbon energy transition, energy security and local economic growth.

More support for private enterprises

By SHI JING in Shanghai

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The recently released 26 measures in Shanghai to support the high-quality development of private enterprises have addressed companies' most urgent needs by improving government services, which is conducive to boosting companies' confidence and stabilizing their expectations, said local officials and experts.

They made the comments during a news conference in mid-April. According to Wu Wei, Shanghai's executive vice-mayor, the new measures have touched upon six major areas.

They include further improving the overall development environment, completing policy support for private companies' investment and financing, solving problems of arrear payments to private companies, better protecting the legal rights and interests of private companies and their owners, encouraging innovation as well as strengthening government support for these companies.

More specifically, private enterprises will be better guided to participate in the construction and management of transportation, energy, and affordable housing projects. They will be supported to leverage the low-carbon transformation projects related to green fuel or the circular economy.

Private enterprises are also encouraged to take part in the city's

major projects in strategic emerging industries, while financing channels for private enterprises should be expanded.

They are also encouraged to make mergers and acquisitions in projects related to the development of new quality productive forces or those focusing on the upgrading of traditional industries.

They are supported to conduct market value management via stock buybacks and shareholders' increased holding. Government investment funds and industrial funds are also encouraged to invest in privately-invested projects, according to the new measures.

Zhou Xiaoquan, executive deputy director of Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Finance, said at the news conference that much progress has been made regarding the measures issued in October to address the financing difficulties frequently faced by small and medium-sized enterprises.

By the end of 2024, the balance of bank loans rendered to private enterprises reached 3.2 trillion yuan (\$440 billion), up 10 percent year-on-year. The average interest rate for the loans issued throughout last year was 3.48 percent, 0.47 percentage points lower than that at the beginning of 2024, according to Zhou.

Local government bodies have recently come out with exchange rate hedging guarantee credit enhancement products to help foreign trade companies better cope

with market volatility, he added.

He Wanpeng, chief of the Shanghai Qiantan Emerging Industry Research Institute, said the new measures have played an important role in "clearing up misunderstandings".

"There has been some misunderstanding about the ecosystem of the private economy in Shanghai. Some falsely believed that Shanghai has not attached as much importance to private enterprises. But the truth is, Shanghai is home to a large number of private enterprises, which have achieved rapid growth here," said He.

Xia Qingmei, deputy general manager of OBiO Technology, also attended the news conference. The new measures related to financing have attracted most of her attention.

"Mainly serving the domestic market, OBiO specializes in gene and cell therapy. The new measures have given us more confidence in focusing on our prime operations in Shanghai, where we have already grown from a very small scale to a listed company," she said.

Gu Jun, head of the Shanghai Municipal Development & Reform Commission, said that private enterprises have served as an important economic driver for Shanghai.

These companies created about 75 percent of the city's new job opportunities last year. They accounted for nearly 30 percent of Shanghai's industrial output and fixed asset investment.

FTZ helping spur coordinated growth

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin

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China (Tianjin) Pilot Free Trade Zone vows to enhance its initiatives to align with global trade standards and promote the coordinated development among Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei province, said Tianjin's Vice-Mayor Li Wenhai.

"These efforts are expected to strengthen the new quality productive forces and solidify the FTZs' prominent position in leasing, factoring sectors, cross-border e-commerce and offshore trade," said Li during a recent news conference marking the FTZ's 10-year anniversary.

Wang Libing, vice-director of Tianjin Customs, said: "The city's Customs will play a crucial role in container shipments and streamline clearance processes through cutting-edge smart technologies.

Tailored services will facilitate more cross-border transactions, and 24 new policies will facilitate the swift entry of imported fruits into Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province. Collaborative development among the FTZs in the region (Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province) in terms of supervision is currently underway."

The Tianjin Branch of the People's Bank of China and the Tianjin Maritime Safety Administration also vowed to enact new policies to boost FTZs in the region.

Over the past decade, a total of 49 innovative models among all of 686 models launched in Tianjin have been promoted to other FTZs.

Li said, "We have expanded the use of free-trade accounts, amassing funds nearing 35 billion yuan (\$4.8 billion) in a fully operational cross-border renminbi fund pool,

with a business scale exceeding 1.1 trillion yuan."

The innovative oil and gas trading center model has yielded significant results, with transaction volume surpassing 10 billion yuan. Further innovative initiatives to enhance FT accounts are underway.

Similar to the Tianjin FTZ, Shanghai's Pudong New Area recently introduced 14 new measures to bolster efforts to attract foreign investment, contributing to increased reform and opening-up endeavors.

China recently issued opinions aimed at enhancing the strategy for implementing pilot free trade zones, focusing on approximately five years of pioneering and integrated exploration.

The document underscores the comprehensive improvement in institutional openness, the effec-



Employees check lifting equipment at Tianjin Port. ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA

Briefly

Marine tourism sector sees robust growth

China's marine tourism sector recorded robust growth in the first quarter. The sector's value-added output reached 384.2 billion yuan (\$53.4 billion) in the January-March period, a year-on-year increase of 7.5 percent, according to estimates from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

More NEV charging infrastructure facilities

The number of charging infrastructure facilities in China increased 47.6 percent year-on-year by the end of March, as the country further expanded its charging infrastructure network for new energy vehicles, according to the National Energy Administration.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/EARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

Eastern Hemisphere.

Chen Heqiang, vice-president of GE Healthcare China, said, "The Tianjin FTZ has continuously driven profound integration of institutional, technological and industrial innovations, presenting significant development opportunities."

BUSINESS

CHN Energy pursues cleaner coal technology

By ZHENG XIN
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China Energy Investment Corp (CHN Energy), the country's largest coal-fired power generator by capacity, has vowed to continue stepping up investment in renewable energy and clean utilization of coal this year, as it seeks to balance energy supply and decarbonization.

The company will accelerate efforts to push forward pilot projects in cleaner coal technology, including carbon capture and alternative fuel co-firing, company spokesman Huang Qing said during a news conference held recently in Beijing.

The State-owned energy giant reported that its self-produced coal output in the first quarter matched its historical single-quarter daily production record.

Monthly self-produced coal output has remained above 50 million metric tons for 42 consecutive months, highlighting its significant contribution to energy supply stability, said Huang.

Simultaneously, CHN Energy is pushing forward with the optimization and upgrading of its existing, newly built and next-generation coal power units to enhance efficiency and reduce emissions.

Specific demonstration projects include biomass co-firing at power plants in Shouguang, Shandong province and Jingmen, Hubei province; a 10 percent ammonia co-firing trial at the Taishan power plant in Guangdong province; and the construction of carbon capture, utilization and storage systems with capacities of 150,000 tons per year at

the Jinjie plant in Shaanxi province; and 500,000 tons per year at the Taizhou plant in Jiangsu province.

Analysts believe State-owned enterprises, historically central to China's large-scale development, have significantly increased investments in renewable energy in recent years.

This shift is seen as strongly aligned with national goals for sustainable growth and energy security, and is considered essential for China to achieve its 2060 carbon neutrality target, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Huang said the group will continue deepening technological research into clean and efficient coal utilization and accelerate the construction of a new energy system that optimizes the combination of coal power and new energy sources.

Looking ahead, the group plans to further explore the feasibility, economics and applicability of large-scale low-carbon co-firing and significant carbon reduction technologies in coal power units, aiming to build a mature, reliable and widely applicable technical system, he said.

The company's newly installed and operational capacity of renewable energy surpassed 30 million kilowatts for the first time in history last year, with renewable energy accounting for over 40 percent of the company's total installed capacity.

The company also highlighted the application of artificial intelligence technology, undertaking national AI infrastructure tasks and implementing "AI+" initiatives in areas such as safe production and equipment maintenance.

Faster access



An image shows the newly completed Lianshui Interchange underpass in Huaian, Jiangsu province. The underpass, linking with the Lianyungang-Zhenjiang Expressway, in Lianshui county, Jiangsu, is part of the expansion of the expressway. It was built by China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau to cut highway access time for county locals by 40 percent, thereby enhancing regional connectivity and economic integration. Boosted by adequate fiscal support, many local governments like Lianshui's are ramping up effective investment in projects key to livelihoods to drive up the local economy. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BOE ramps up R&D, AI integration; seeks growth drivers in emerging biz

By FAN FEIFEI
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BOE Technology Group Co Ltd, a major Chinese display panel maker, is expanding its presence in emerging business segments like solar cells, and bolstering the integration of artificial intelligence technology with manufacturing, operation and products to achieve sustainable development, said a senior executive of the company.

Feng Qiang, CEO of BOE, said the company is transitioning from a semiconductor display enterprise into an internet of things firm, with about 7 percent of its annual revenue spent on technological research and development, especially in low-power consumption technology.

According to Feng, the company has launched an AI Plus strategy to advance the deeper application of AI in areas such as intelligent manufacturing, product innovation and operation management, in a bid to enhance product competitiveness, reduce resource waste, lower production costs and improve operational efficiency.

BOE has vowed to achieve carbon neutrality across the entire group by 2050 and join hands with global partners to promote the green transformation and

upgrading of the display industry, Feng said.

He highlighted that sustainable development is vital for the survival of companies, which is of great significance to reinforce Chinese companies' competitive edge on the global stage and lay a solid foundation for business diversification. The company has gradually elevated sustainable development to its core strategy.

At present, BOE has marched into a wide range of fields, including the internet of vehicles, smart energy, industrial internet, ultra high definition displays and digital art, while continuously exploring new development opportunities based on its advantages in the display sector, he added.

By the end of 2024, it had accumulated more than 100,000 independent patent applications, and carried out extensive cooperation with both domestic and foreign research institutes, top universities and enterprises in the upstream and downstream of industrial chains.

BOE reported that its total revenue reached 198.38 billion yuan (\$27.3 billion) last year, marking a 13.66 percent year-on-year increase, while its net profit attributable to shareholders stood at 5.32 billion yuan, surging

108.97 percent year-on-year.

BOE is increasing investments in technological innovation, especially in fundamental and forward-looking technologies, and banking on new-generation semiconductor displays represented by organic light-emitting diodes or OLED, which boast immense application potential in various fields such as smartphones, televisions, vehicle-mounted displays and wearable gadgets.

The company has stepped up its push to expand in sensors, mini LED, IoT and intelligent healthcare and promote the integration of cutting-edge digital technologies like 5G, big data and the IoT with semiconductor displays.

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

China is speeding up industrialization in emerging technologies, and is driving fiscal support to promote the development of innovation in the new-generation display industry. New display technologies will usher in speedy growth, along with the maturity of such technologies and continuous decline of costs, experts said.



A Malaysia Airlines aircraft comes in to land at Shanghai Pudong International Airport on Sept 1, 2024. The airline is operated by Malaysia Aviation Group. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

MAG eyes higher reach in China

Malaysian airline operator to optimize aircraft fleet, tap into second-tier cities

By ZHONG NAN
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Malaysia Aviation Group, parent company of Malaysia Airlines, plans to expand its presence in China by ramping up frequencies on core routes and launching direct services to second-tier cities over the next three years, said its top executive.

"Our Destination 2030 fleet plan will power this expansion," said Izham Ismail, group managing director of MAG, adding that the group will continue to evaluate its future fleet options, including aircraft from Commercial Aircraft Corp of China Ltd, manufacturer of narrowbody aircraft C909 regional jet and C919.

As part of its fleet modernization plan, the group recently acquired an additional 18 Boeing 737-8 aircraft, in addition to 12 Boeing 737-10 as part of phase two of its narrowbody fleet renewal.

MAG will gradually phase out the older generation Boeing 737-800 aircraft, aiming for a modernized narrowbody fleet of 55 Boeing 737-8 and 737-10 aircraft by 2030.

With MAG introducing new aircraft for regional sectors and deploying wide-body aircraft on

By leveraging the strength of our partners, we are able to provide our passengers with greater flexibility, convenience and reach across the region."

Izham Ismail, group managing director of Malaysia Aviation Group

longer sectors, he said these new generation jets will deliver superior fuel efficiency, enhanced reliability and greater comfort, enabling the company to serve more Chinese destinations at optimal frequency.

Malaysia Airlines currently operates to four cities in the Chinese mainland, namely Beijing; Shanghai; Guangzhou in Guangdong province; and Xiamen in Fujian province. The consistent demand from both inbound and outbound travelers has supported a robust 80 percent load factor across China

routes in the first quarter, signaling a strong recovery in traffic and business momentum.

Highlighting that the new visa waiver policy between China and Malaysia has further unlocked significant travel demand, he said that MAG will scale its mainline network to key markets across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Australia, New Zealand and South Asia, solidifying Kuala Lumpur's role as a gateway to Asia and beyond, facilitating effortless one-stop transit.

To seize more market share, the company has strengthened its customer service teams by adding more Chinese-speaking staff and enhancing its presence in China through strategic partnerships.

"By leveraging the strength of our partners, we are able to provide our passengers with greater flexibility, convenience and reach across the region," he added.

For instance, MAG has expanded its codeshare agreement with China Southern Airlines, offering broader access to key cities across China. Its long-standing partnership with China's Xiamen Airlines also continues to provide passengers with convenient, single-ticket access to a wider domestic network, including second and third-tier cities.

Driven by the goal of meeting Chinese travelers' preferences, MAG has embarked on a wide-ranging digital transformation, combining

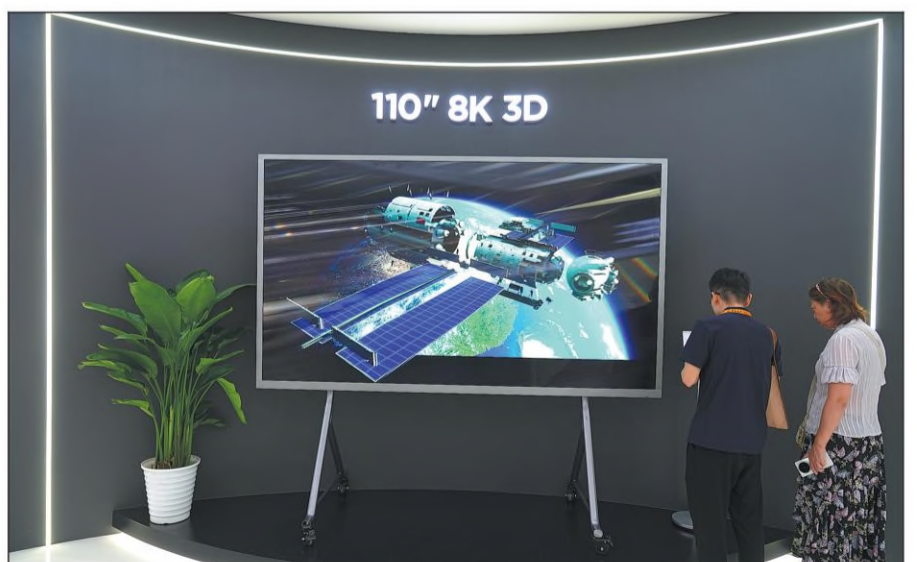
technology and enhanced services, the executive said.

For example, Malaysia Airlines has been actively engaging with existing and potential clients on popular Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo and RedNote, also known in China as Xiaohongshu.

Despite industry headwinds in 2024, MAG posted a profit of \$12.35 million last year, showing enhanced financial resilience.

The group currently operates a fleet of 114 aircraft. It has an existing order for 25 Boeing 737-8 aircraft through a long-term lease with Air Lease Corp, with 11 already delivered and the rest scheduled for delivery by 2027. In addition, the company is advancing its widebody renewal with an order for 20 Airbus A330neo aircraft, three of which have already been delivered to date.

Boosted by deepening political and business ties, visa-free policy and the tangible growth of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Malaysia will accelerate collaboration across both emerging and traditional sectors, including people-to-people exchanges, green technology and infrastructure connectivity in the years ahead, said Zhang Jianping, deputy director of the academic committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.



Visitors check out a BOE display during a high-tech expo in Beijing in September. SONG YU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Against the backdrop of increasing external uncertainties, more coordinated efforts are required to resolve bottlenecks and increase investments in basic research and strategic forward-looking technologies, said Chen Duan, director of the Digital Economy Integration Innovation Development Center at Central University of Finance and Economics.

Chen called for efforts to expedite the translation and application of

key scientific and technological breakthroughs and support leading high-tech companies — which play a critical part in technological innovation — to pour more capital into cutting-edge technologies to better serve the country's development strategy.

Li Yaqin, general manager of Sig-maintell Consulting, a Beijing-based market research firm, said demand for flexible OLED panels used in foldable smartphones will

continue to rise on the back of 5G commercial applications. Panel makers should further improve their yield rate capacities and reduce production costs.

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

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

Strong personal rapport of heads of state cements and guides China-Russia relations

Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia from Wednesday to Saturday will be his 11th and it marks yet another milestone in the enduring partnership between China and Russia and the head-of-state diplomacy that has been such a defining feature of the two countries' relations in the new era.

Since 2013, President Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin have convened over 40 times, keeping the trajectory of the China-Russia relationship on a steady course amid the challenging and changing global landscape. Through regular meetings and diverse communication channels, the two leaders have established a strong personal rapport and aligned their stances on bilateral affairs, global dynamics and international governance.

This continuous dialogue has not only bolstered political trust but also laid the groundwork for collaborative mechanisms at multiple levels, including routine head-of-state summits that have ensured the effective execution of mutual agreements.

The deepening personal rapport between the two leaders has yielded significant dividends for the two countries' cooperation across various sectors such as the automotive, electromechanical and agricultural industries, and the fostering of a robust wave of collaboration in emerging domains.

Notably, China has consistently held its position as Russia's principal trading partner for 15 consecutive years, while Russia has risen to be China's eighth-largest trading partner. In 2024, the bilateral trade volume between the two nations exceeded \$240 billion, surpassing projections well ahead of schedule.

The unwavering commitment of the two leaders to fortify the ties between their two countries exemplifies a strategic partnership founded on trust, cooperation and shared development objectives.

As a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry highlighted, the upcoming visit underscores the shared importance the two sides attach to deepening political trust and enhancing practical cooperation amid the rapidly evolving global environment.

As China and Russia continue to navigate the complexities of the turbulent global geopolitical landscape, their collaborative efforts stand as a testament to the resilience and dynamism of their leaders' enduring rapport.

A lot of changes have taken place in the world and

regional arena since their last face-to-face talks in Russia's Kazan in October on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit, not least the change of US administration with a White House agenda aimed at reinforcing "US exceptionalism".

But against the backdrop of this year's significant historical milestones, including the 80th anniversary of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War, both nations have reaffirmed their commitment to preserving the lessons of the past and upholding the values of international justice and fairness that were the intended pillars of the postwar system.

Thus the two leaders have agreed to jointly remember history, honor the martyrs, and foster a right view of history, and to defend the outcomes of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War.

As founding members of the United Nations, China and Russia bear a special responsibility in safeguarding the international order and promoting multilateral cooperation. By aligning their efforts in key international forums, such as the UN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, the two nations seek to counter unilateralism and champion a multipolar world order based on equality and inclusivity.

The pivotal role of head-of-state diplomacy underscores the resilience and dynamism that has come to define China-Russia cooperation, which has weathered the challenges of the times and continued to thrive. With a burgeoning trade volume and a diverse range of collaborative initiatives, the partnership between these two nations serves as a model of mutually beneficial engagement and strategic alignment.

President Xi's upcoming state visit is expected to inject fresh vitality into the two countries' cooperation and contribute positively to strengthening their comprehensive strategic coordination, which stands as a beacon of stability in an uncertain world.

By staying true to their shared vision and goals, the two countries are demonstrating the value of deep political trust and practical cooperation in releasing the dividends of mutually beneficial engagement for the benefit of their people.

The strong rapport between the two leaders is testament to the enduring power of the two countries' steadfast partnership of collaboration and friendship that is poised to shape the future landscape of multipolar international relations.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Weaponization of tariffs leaves no party unscathed

The US government's tariff policy has cost the state of California billions of dollars. So much so that California Governor Gavin Newsom recently reaffirmed the state's commitment to maintaining open trade relations with China.

Newsom emphasized that the state is "over 2,000 miles from Washington and a world away in mindset". California even filed a lawsuit in April challenging the federal government over tariffs. California has become the first state to take such legal action.

The US government's "tariff weapon" has also drawn sharp criticism from financial titans such as US billionaire investor Warren Buffett, who said last week that "trade should not be a weapon". His remarks came after reports quoted data to show that the US economy has contracted for the first time in three years, swamped by a flood of imports as businesses raced to avoid higher costs from tariffs.

The trade war is proof that "Make America Great Again" is raiding people's wallets — stock market losses are wiping out whatever they have saved for their children's college education, grocery prices are soaring and small business owners are struggling under rising costs. An analysis in April by The Budget Lab at Yale University estimates that the tariffs so far this year will increase costs by at least 3 percent, pushing up costs for the average household in the

United States by about \$4,900. Research shows that consumers might need to shell out 87 percent more for shoes and 65 percent more for apparel in the short-run and 29 percent and 25 percent more, respectively, in the long run.

Last week, the Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America urged Washington to exempt shoes from "reciprocal tariffs". In a letter signed by 76 footwear companies, the FDRA said that hundreds of businesses face the prospect of closure, tens of thousands of jobs are at stake, many orders have been placed on hold, and footwear inventory for US consumers may soon run low. The tariffs will not drive shoe manufacturing back to the US, the letter said.

The US' tariff stick is also failing diplomatically. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba flatly rejected the US' unreasonable demand to eliminate trade deficits. The tariffs have also led to the collapse of US-Japan trade talks. The US-Japan talks team merely agreed to "meet again" with few substantive outcomes. Similar stalemates plague negotiations with Europe, where the European Union has prepared retaliatory tariffs on €26 billion (\$29.45 billion) of US goods.

The 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act worsened the Great Depression — a mistake the US seems to be repeating. Mainstream economists largely agree that tariffs cause

inflation, because importers — not the countries exporting the goods — pay the tax, and they typically pass that cost on to consumers. The US Chamber of Commerce wrote to the White House last week, warning against "irreparable harm" to small businesses and a potential economic recession.

These developments make it clear that if the US continues to wield tariffs as a weapon, it will ultimately harm itself. Only by returning to rational dialogue can the global economy avoid spiraling deeper into turmoil.

Despite unilateral pressure from the US, China's stable and resilient market continues to provide opportunities for global businesses. China has demonstrated its commitment to fostering an equitable global economic landscape by creating opportunities for small businesses to thrive without market access barriers, nurturing cutting-edge technological innovation, and strengthening cooperation among developing nations.

China remains steadfast in upholding international fairness and justice, resolutely opposing any form of unilateralism and power politics that threaten the stability of the multilateral system. Through concrete actions, China continues to champion a new paradigm of international relations based on mutual respect and shared prosperity.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Japan should cherish momentum of improving ties

The momentum of improvement in China-Japan relations has not been come by easily and must be cherished. That's the core message Beijing sent to Tokyo during Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to the country in March, reflecting China's strong wish that the Japanese side reciprocate its commitment to keeping Sino-Japanese ties on the right track of healthy development.

However, the Japanese Ministry of Defense's claim that a Chinese helicopter violated Japanese "airspace" after the China Coast Guard deployed a shipborne helicopter to expel a Japanese aircraft that illegally entered China's airspace over the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea over the weekend shows Beijing's message has fallen on the deaf ears of some in the Shigeru Ishiba government.

The facts regarding the latest incident are clear. The Japanese government allowed a Japanese civilian aircraft to illegally enter the airspace of the Diaoyu Islands on Saturday. And China took necessary control measures in accordance with the law to warn and expel the aircraft to safeguard its sovereignty.

The incident would have stopped there were it not for the Japanese side choosing to go farther to try and exploit the incident to smear China, accusing its legitimate, justified and restrained move as "intrusion ... into Japan's territorial airspace".

Both China and Japan, along with other regional partners, including the Republic of Korea and the Southeast Asian countries, have reached a broad consensus on the urgency to stabilize their ties, regional situations and industry and supply chains through cooperation and consultation.

That's why, despite the occasional tensions in the East China Sea and South China Sea, the overall regional situation remains stable and progressive thanks to the joint efforts of regional countries.

The visits some senior politicians of both the Liberal Democratic Party and the Komeito of Japan paid to China recently in a bid to help resolve some unsettled issues of common interests and concerns of the two countries highlight the urgency felt by some in Japan for the two sides to focus on expanding their common interest and shelving their differences.

Since it is already a bilateral consensus to comprehensively advance the strategic relationship of mutual benefit and to build constructive and stable bilateral ties since the meeting of the leaders of the two countries in Lima, capital of Peru, in November,

the Japanese side should bear a bigger picture in mind and carefully weigh its gains and losses over the Diaoyu Islands issue.

Since it cannot settle the issue in a short time given the current situation, provoking China over it will only harm Japan's interest by making the situation more complicated.

As close neighbors, the relationship between China and Japan holds significance that goes beyond the bilateral scope, and the two sides should face up to history and look to the future, maintain the right direction of bilateral relations, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, promote steady and long-term bilateral relations, and contribute to the peace and prosperity of the region.

The US, which occupied Japan after the war, arbitrarily included the Diaoyu Islands under its trusteeship in the 1950s and "returned" the "power of administration" to Japan in the 1970s. The backroom deal between the US and Japan concerning the Diaoyu Islands was illegal and invalid, and cannot change the fact that the Diaoyu Islands belong to China.

By "returning" the islands to Japan, a move against the internationally recognized postwar arrangements, the US sought to sow discord between China and Japan and to take advantage of the Diaoyu Islands issue as it has been doing all these years. The rise of right-wing nationalism in Japan has given the US leverage to heighten its attempts in that regard, pushing Japan to provoke China over the issue as the regional vanguard of its "Indo-Pacific strategy".

That the issue did not hinder the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two neighbors in 1972, and did not impact the productive economic and trade cooperation between them over the past decades, fully indicates the two sides had the political wisdom, space and ability to prevent it from becoming a flashpoint in their relations. They need to show they still have those today.

Amid the global economic shifts and rising protectionism, it is imperative for China and Japan, as major global economies, to foster deeper mutual trust to bridge their differences and strengthen their cooperation so they can shoulder their responsibilities. A collaborative approach is in the interests of the two countries, and holds the potential to inject fresh momentum into the regional economy and provide stability in uncertain times.

What They Say

Albanese reaps dividend of not toeing US line

Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese became the first Australian prime minister in 21 years to secure a second consecutive term, when he claimed victory in the federal election on Saturday.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio congratulated Albanese on his election to a second three-year term, saying that "The United States looks forward to deepening its relationship with Australia to advance our common interests and promote freedom and stability in the Indo-Pacific and globally". But the Albanese government has increased its majority by not modeling itself on the incumbent US administration.

Instead of stressing the "shared values" that Rubio highlighted in his congratulatory remarks, Albanese told supporters in Sydney after his win in the election that: "Australians have chosen to face global challenges the Australian way, looking after each other while building for the future," adding that "Today, the Australian people have voted for Australian values: for fairness, aspiration and opportunity for all; for the strength to show courage in adversity and kindness to those in need".

Labor had held a narrow majority of 78 seats in the 151-seat House of Representatives, the lower chamber where parties form governments, but is on track to increase its majority in its second term, which as many observed is

attributable to the Albanese government's determination to draw a clear demarcation line with the US administration's beggar-thy-neighbor policy in trade and geopolitics.

If the US administration really hopes to drag Australia to its side, it should know the damaging impacts of its tariff policy and the chaos caused by its "Indo-Pacific" strategy in the Asia-Pacific, as well as Australia's energy policy, as inflation has been a major election issue in the country, with both the Labor Party and the Conservatives agreeing the country faces a cost of living crisis.

The central bank of Australia reduced its benchmark cash interest rate by a quarter percentage point in February to 4.1 percent in an indication that the worst of the financial hardship had passed. The rate is widely expected to be cut again at the bank's next board meeting on May 20, this time to encourage investment amid the international economic uncertainty generated by the US administration's tariff policy, according to a report of the Associated Press.

By contributing to regional peace and stability, promoting free trade and consolidating the stability of global industry and supply chains, the Albanese government can better help Australia cope with the economic challenges during its second term. A stable external regional environment will also serve Australia's interest.

Almost all regional countries have seen through the US' tricks in its "Indo-Pacific" strategy, which is to divide the region to meet its own narrow ends to contain China. And Australia has no reason to foot the bill for the US' geopolitical game.

Delivering his victory speech at a Labor event in Sydney, Albanese said that his government was taking on the task of repaying voters' trust "with new hope, new confidence and new determination. Together we are turning a corner and together we will make our way forward".

Saying that it was a time of profound opportunity for the nation, he said that "We have everything we need to seize this moment and make it our own, but we must do it together".

Beijing has congratulated the Labor Party and Prime Minister Albanese on their election victory, and said that China is willing to work with the Australian government to follow the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and continue to promote the building of a more mature, stable and fruitful China-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership. A stable and healthy Sino-Australian relationship is conducive to benefiting the two countries and their peoples, and making positive contributions to promoting peace and stability in the region and the world.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

COMMENT



Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM
China and the World Roundtable | China-EU Relations

Editor's note: As China and the EU mark 50 years of diplomatic relations, their partnership remains crucial in navigating global uncertainties. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Borut Pahor

Trust key to China-EU relations

This year, May 6 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union. This will take place at a significant moment for both of them, as well as for the entire world. The old, dangerous geopolitics — based on power, protectionism and spheres of influence — are returning. While it's not the first time that comprehensive relations between China and the EU have been tested by global political, economic and technological changes, the current shifts are, at the same time, something unique.

The United States, which has been the pillar of the Western world, the driving force behind globalization, and a cornerstone of global stability since World War II, is now calling all of that into question. For its friends and allies, including the EU, this poses an unprecedented challenge. But it has also made one thing increasingly clear: the EU must become more united in order to become more self-reliant.

This does not mean that the EU wants to oppose the US, rather that the EU seeks to establish greater autonomy in its relationship with the US — from ensuring security to strengthening its position in global politics. Only greater unity, respecting national differences, will allow the EU to become a strong global political, economic and technological power — both within and beyond its borders.

There is no reason that China should have to experience these changes in geopolitics — particularly the radical shifts in the official policies of Washington — in such a dramatic way. While there are many motivations and reasons for them, there is no doubt that the primary focus of these changes in US policy is an attempt to stop, or at least slow, China's rise. The US' actions to achieve this, particularly its initiation of a trade war, have significantly shaken the economic and political stability of the world, making it all the more



The author is former prime minister & president of Slovenia, EU (2012-2022), and co-chairman of the Mencius Foundation Advisory Board.

difficult to foresee subsequent global changes.

The US has announced tariffs on virtually the entire world. What is particularly interesting is that the US decided to impose these tariffs unilaterally, both on allied countries and competing nations. Given the earlier assessment that the strategic shift in US policy is primarily focused on China, this seems illogical. To some

extent, this approach can be explained by US President Donald Trump's firm belief that the US must regain the respect of the entire world, without exception. This pursuit of respect for the US as the world's central superpower has been central to Trump's rhetoric both before and after the elections. He justifies tariffs on the world by asserting that all countries, without exception, have exploited the generosity of the US, illustrating this with the trade deficit. As a result, the trade deficit has become part of the equation on which the level of tariffs the US wishes to impose on individual countries is calculated.

The unpredictability of where the trade war might lead remains too great. On the one hand, there is the impression that Trump sees the signif-

icant tariff increases as a tool for the renaissance of US industry. On the other hand, there is also the impression that it is equally important that both the US and global public directly witness this renaissance of US power and influence in global politics, economics and security.

In circumstances like these, where many grounding principles are being uprooted, a growing number of observers see a shared interest between China and the European Union in deepening their economic cooperation. Unfortunately, Brussels is no more autonomous now — but the EU does have a compelling reason and a legitimate basis to begin striving for greater autonomy, including through a warming of economic cooperation with China. This is not because the EU wishes to position itself against the US. But because deeper economic cooperation between the EU and China is mutually beneficial — regardless of the current, highly idiosyncratic circumstances. These circumstances merely act as an accelerator for such cooperation.

While Beijing may officially express hope for improved trade relations with the EU, it seems to be relying more heavily on its tangible influence in Asia, Africa, and the countries of the Global South.

Trust is something desperately missing from world politics. The low level of dialogue, as well as the neglected search for common, compromise-based solutions that are sustainable for the entire world, threatens global peace. But even in this context, reason must prevail. Regarding China-EU relations, this means a rational assessment of the possibilities for strengthening everything that is of mutual benefit. Trade and the economy are, without doubt, examples of this. Political courage will be needed to strengthen trust. It will not be easy. But it remains possible.

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

Liu Feitao

Robust ties add certainty amid global uncertainty

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union. For the past 50 years, the two have propelled each other's development based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation, promoting global governance and injecting momentum to stabilize the turbulent world. Their cooperation is ample proof that the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership has a strong endogenous driving force, which, if the two join hands to promote it, will bring more certainty to the world.

By 2003, they had formed a comprehensive strategic partnership. To date, a multi-tiered dialogue mechanism has been established, including the annual China-EU leaders' meeting, the China-EU High-Level Strategic Dialogue, the China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, and the China-EU High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue.

Currently, China is advancing its modernization through high-quality development, while Europe is more resolutely pursuing strategic autonomy than ever, undergoing a series of transformative changes in its political and social landscape. In this context, both China and Europe face the historic task of achieving higher-quality development.

Therefore, the two sides have every reason to work together, promote a fair multipolarization and inclusive economic globalization, maintain an open world economy, and address global challenges.

Economic and trade cooperation has always served as a ballast for bilateral relations. Their strengths in terms of giant markets, advanced industry systems, leading technologies, rich human resources, and capital have formed a strong symbiosis. With their economies being highly complementary, bilateral trade has grown from \$2.4 billion in 1975 to \$780 billion in 2024, and investment has grown from zero to around \$260 billion. Currently, they stand as each other's second-largest trading partner. The EU is the largest source of imports for China's consumer goods, and the China-Europe freight train has operated over 100,000 trips, transporting goods worth \$420 billion.

With the accelerated evolution of the international industry landscape, the two sides are poised to deepen integration in industry chains and in high-tech, propelling the symbiosis and mutual benefits of their economies. China's advanced technologies and industrial chains in fields such as photovoltaics and electric vehicles can play a key role in boosting the EU green transition outlined in the European Green Deal. Meanwhile, the EU's technological expertise and regulatory experience in sectors like electronics, aerospace and biopharmaceuticals can fulfill its potential in China's vast consumer market.

In recent years, China has introduced a series of policies including enhancing market access, improving the business environment, increasing intellectual property protection, and expanding visa-free access to facilitate exchanges, showcasing China's determination to promote high-level opening-up. These will provide a favorable environment for European enterprises to invest in China and start business.

China and the EU have achieved and should continue significant cooperation in global governance as steadfast advocates of multilateralism. They have reached a broad consensus on issues such as climate change and environmental governance, supporting the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Both sides also uphold the United Nations' central role in international affairs and jointly support increasing the representation of developing countries in the UN Security Council.

Additionally, China and Europe have maintained long-term consultation in international arms control and non-proliferation, contributing to the achievement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action related to the peaceful resolution of the Iran nuclear issue.

Currently, as multilateralism faces challenges, there is an urgent need for collaborative rule-making and governance in areas such as global trade and artificial intelligence. As defenders of multilateralism, China and Europe should work together to establish a fair and reasonable global governance system. This involves deepening mutual support within multilateral frameworks such as the UN and the G20, and reforming global systems in economics, finance, trade, digital technology, ecology and security to ensure they develop in a more just direction. Furthermore, they should strengthen relations with Global South countries, addressing the interests of developing nations and promoting a more balanced and orderly multipolar world.

With the resurgence of protectionism and the United States' weaponization of tariffs, in effect unilateral bullying, posing threats to the international community including China and the EU, and sparking global trade conflicts, the world is once again at a critical juncture. China and Europe are reliable partners in upholding an open world economy. As advocates of economic globalization and free trade, and staunch supporters of the World Trade Organization, China and the EU should reinforce their partnership, enhance communication and expand open cooperation, in order to safeguard international trade rules and fairness.

As the world's second- and third-largest economies, China and the EU together account for over one-third of global economic output and more than a quarter of global trade. They are well-positioned to jointly counter unilateral bullying. Just as President Xi Jinping has noted that there exists no clash of fundamental interests or geopolitical conflicts between China and the European Union, making them partners that can contribute to each other's success.

It is believed that guided by this partnership, China and Europe are poised to embark on another promising 50 years of cooperation.

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Aranca Gonzalez

Past 50 years offer guide to future of relationship

On May 6, 1975, then European Commission vice-president Christopher Soames and the then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai opened the first chapter of diplomatic relations between the then European Economic Community and China.

This was a different Europe: smaller — with only nine member states — and still primarily focused on economic matters, hence it was an “economic community” and not the union that would be established in 1993. It was also a different China: with an economy half the size of that of France. It was just beginning to open up in a process that would result in an unparalleled economic transformation. And the backdrop to this was a world engulfed in a Cold War of geopolitical rivalry and ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

During Soames' visit to China in 1975, China expressed its support for a strong and united Europe as a vital contribution to a peaceful world and committed to conduct its future international economic relations in the spirit of dialogue and cooperation and not confrontation.

The visit paved the way for the first trade agreement concluded in 1978, which was soon replaced by a more comprehensive trade and cooperation deal concluded in 1985. With China fully embarked on reform and opening-up under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the agreement which spanned agriculture and rural development, scientific and industrial cooperation, energy, environmental issues and vocational



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training was intended to promote the growth and modernization of the Chinese economy, while being mutually advantageous.

Deng's message to the then European Commission president Jacques Delors during his first visit to Beijing in July 1986 was that China saw in Europe an important economic partner and a source of development cooperation, but also that a united Europe could be an important counterweight to hegemony. This has been a consistent message from China to this date.

The year of 2001 marked an important moment as China became a member of the World Trade Organization, an aspiration supported by the European Union who saw in it the means to anchor Chinese reforms into a multilateral framework, as well as a means to steer in the right direction the Chinese economy, and a catalyst for continued reforms in the Chinese economy toward a global level playing field.

Both China and the EU worked together to advance multilateralism in 2015 with the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to end extreme poverty in the

world by 2030 and the Paris Agreement, to address the most pressing collective threat to humanity. Yes, the level of ambition that both had for these agreements differed, but the most important fact remains that cooperation and compromise made multilateralism possible.

As the relationship celebrates its 50th anniversary, much has changed. Bilateral trade has grown exponentially, with the two trading more in one day than they did in the whole of 1975. Investment has grown in both directions. China has now significantly improved its technological and innovation capacities, often surpassing those of the EU. Asia has become the engine of global trade. But China and Europe also have different views on issues such as “unfair competition”, “economic imbalances” as well as on “human rights”, Ukraine and other foreign and security matters. And the benign international environment of the last three decades has now turned into a US-China rivalry.

In a world where many see cooperation as a constraint, where violations of international law, including internationally agreed borders are on the rise, and as some consider open trade as a zero-sum game, there may be merit in looking back to the original foundations of bilateral cooperation for inspiration to build a more functional relationship between the European Union and China. Both should do this as a function of their own interests and the starting point should be to acknowledge the differences that exist between both, economically and politically. Sugar coating

will not work. The aim should be to manage the differences starting with avoiding making them bigger. But ignoring each other or even embarking on de-coupling from each other will not work either. What matters now is to walk the talk.

There is scope to build on commonalities, including the value of open markets and fair trade to their economies, the importance of being more generous toward the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries, as well as the need for modernized international trade rules to ensure a global level playing field. Both have an interest in advancing just and long-lasting solutions to conflicts such as in Ukraine or Palestine. Both have much in common in accelerating the fight against climate change. Both have an opportunity to help build an international framework for the ethics of artificial intelligence or to advance scientific cooperation.

Today, as 50 years ago, a united Europe remains a force of global good, a ballast in a polarized world. And China's commitment to cooperation and dialogue, not confrontation, remains vital to global stability. Both should frame their relations based on the understanding that there will be areas of stark difference, but that competition and many of honest collaboration. Both are indispensable to a functioning multilateral order. The alternative is a world of conflict and chaos, which is in no one's interest.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

Shared duty of care

Celebrating 50 years of EU-China relations offers the opportunity to reflect on the past and shape the future

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the European Union and China — a milestone that deserves recognition and thoughtful reflection. In 1975, the world was a very different

place. The European Community, as it was then known, had not yet evolved into the European Union as we know it today.

China as well had not yet begun its own transformative journey, initiated by reform and opening-up. The global stage was dominated by the tensions of the Cold War, dividing nations ideologically and politically.

Over the past five decades, both the EU and China have undergone remarkable transformations. The EU has expanded and integrated, bringing together 27 member states under a shared vision of peace, democracy and prosperity. China has emerged as the world's second-largest economy, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of abject poverty and become a central player in global affairs. Between the EU and China, a robust and mutually beneficial relationship has developed. Trade has grown exponentially, and people-to-people exchanges — through tourism, education and culture — have reached unprecedented levels.

This moment offers both sides a well-earned opportunity to celebrate their achievements and the fruitful cooperation that has developed over half a century. Yet, the most meaningful way to honor this anniversary is not merely to look back, but also to look forward. Commemoration should be a time not just for recognition, but for reflection and ambition. Understanding the past helps us prepare for the future, and both the EU and China must now consider not just the heritage of their relationship, but also the legacy they wish to create in the years to come.

The current international land-

scape presents new challenges and opportunities. The world is no longer divided by the Cold War, but it faces its own complex set of issues — from climate change to geopolitical uncertainty, from digital transformation to economic inequality. A significant factor influencing global dynamics today is the approach of the United States under President Donald Trump, who has taken a distinctly abrasive stance on key global issues. His administration has retreated from multilateral institutions, pulled back from the Paris Agreement on climate change, and launched an aggressive trade war that has disrupted global commerce. These actions have shaken the foundations of international cooperation and cast uncertainty over the global order.

The US appears to believe that it not only has the right to unilaterally dominate global affairs, but that it can further expand this dominance. In Trump's address to Congress on March 6, he concluded with the bold assertion that the US could become "the most dominant civilization ever to exist on the face of this Earth". Such rhetoric reflects a dangerous level of hubris.

What the US government fails to



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recognize is that in today's deeply interconnected world, power is no longer unipolar. Global progress depends on multilateralism, mutual respect, and international coop-

eration. By overestimating its capabilities and exceptionalism, the US simultaneously underestimates the importance and influence of other major global players

— particularly the EU and China.

In this context, the EU and China are presented with both a responsibility and an opportunity. As two of the world's largest economies and most influential global actors, they must step forward to uphold and reform multilateralism. Their partnership can help restore confidence in international institutions and norms, particularly at a time when these are under threat. One key area where their collaboration is essential is climate change.

Both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Agreement, and together they can lead the global effort to transition to a low-carbon, sustainable future. Moreover, the EU and China must work together to strengthen and modernize the World Trade Organization. Global trade needs a fair and rule-based system to thrive, and the WTO must be revitalized to ensure it remains effective in addressing current economic realities. By supporting reforms that enhance transparency, enforceability and inclusiveness, the EU and China can help reinvigorate global trade and promote shared prosperity.

Against this backdrop, the upcoming EU-China summit scheduled for July in Beijing takes on particular significance. It will serve as both a celebration of 50

years of diplomatic relations and a platform for defining the future direction of their partnership. The summit has the potential to be historic — not just for marking a milestone, but for articulating a vision of peace, cooperation and sustainable development for the decades to come.

In fact, the US president's hubris is creating a vacuum in global leadership — one that the EU and China are well positioned to fill. True leadership is not a quest for dominance, nor is it defined by opposition or division. Rather, it is a force that draws others in, grounded in the recognition that it should be genuinely constructive, inclusive and guided by a shared sense of purpose. Leadership earns its legitimacy not through coercion, but through the respect and trust of the global community.

The world today is in need of stability, foresight and shared leadership. The EU and China, through their continued engagement and cooperation, can be a force for positive change. They can demonstrate that even in times of uncertainty, it is possible to work together across cultural and political differences to build a better future. The 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations is not just a marker of the past — it is a call to action for the future.

While commemorating 50 years of diplomatic ties, the EU and China must draw on the lessons of history to shape a shared vision for tomorrow. Their cooperation is more important than ever, not only for their own citizens but for the world at large. Through mutual respect, constructive dialogue and a commitment to multilateralism, they can play a leading role in shaping a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous global future.

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PEDRO BARRAGÁN

Prime mover

From business opportunity to diplomatic leadership, Spain-China relations continue to set a good example

In recent decades, Spain and China have built a solid relationship based on trade, investment and cultural cooperation. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1973, both countries have strengthened their ties through bilateral agreements,

high-level visits and exchange programs. However, the current international scenario, marked by the renewed US rivalry against

China, and the ongoing trade tensions between the European Union and China, creates a new situation that both countries must address.

Spain-China relations have made many remarkable achievements. Bilateral trade exceeded \$48.58 billion in 2023 and grew by an additional 3 percent in 2024, figures that underline China's importance as a trading partner. China is Spain's largest trading partner outside the EU, and high-quality Spanish products such as olive oil, wine and meat products are highly valued in the Chinese market.

Spanish companies such as Inditex, Banco Santander and Gestamp have found in China a dynamic business environment full of opportunities. On the cultural front, the Instituto Cervantes has expanded its presence, and the demand for Spanish language learning in China is growing at an impressive rate, reflecting a genuine interest in strengthening ties with Spain.

The official visit of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to China in April marked a special point in bilateral relations. The meeting with President Xi Jinping consolidated the mutual commitment to strengthen economic cooperation, promote reciprocal investment, and collaborate in areas such as the energy transition and technological innovation. The reaction from

Washington was swift: some sectors viewed the visit as a sign of Europe distancing itself from the US strategy of containing China. Within the EU, opinions were mixed; while some countries applauded the pursuit of new balances, others called for greater coordination in foreign policy toward Beijing. With this initiative, Spain demonstrates its willingness to act with strategic autonomy, pursuing a diplomacy that combines the defense of European principles with a pragmatic and open vision toward China.

In this context of global rivalry initiated by the United States, the EU and China have identified sustainable development as a crucial area for strategic cooperation. Both partners are promoting joint initiatives in renewable energy, energy efficiency and the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Spain, as an active EU member and with strong bilateral ties to China, has intensified its collaboration in areas such as the green economy, the development of clean technologies and sustainable agriculture. In 2025, some new memorandums of understanding will be signed between Spanish and Chinese institutions to facilitate technology transfer in solar energy and to promote electric mobility projects.

Furthermore, Spain and China are cooperating in the promotion of the circular economy, with joint research and development programs aimed at improving waste management and the efficient use of natural resources. This joint strategy not only addresses the urgent need to tackle climate change but also strengthens a positive agenda that enables Europe and China to cooperate constructively despite geopolitical tensions. By acting as a bridge for dialogue and cooperation, Spain reinforces its position as a reliable interlocu-

tor, committed to a low-carbon economy and more sustainable and equitable global growth.

Besides, expanding collaboration in strategic sectors, fostering agreements in science and technology, strengthening cultural exchanges, and supporting the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises are key actions to consolidate a deep and lasting economic and social relationship between Spain and China.

Alongside these initiatives, Spain can play an active role within the EU to promote a fair and constructive approach toward China, moving away from confrontational stances to promote dialogue-based solutions to global disagreements. To do so, Spain must advocate inclusive multilateralism and strengthen multilateral platforms such as the World Trade Organization, the G20 and the United Nations, defending a system based on rules and mutual respect. Additionally, Spain can promote initiatives in Brussels that encourage understanding and cooperation in areas such as climate change, global health and digital transformation, seeking synergies with China rather than antagonism. Another area of potential cooperation is the promotion of Euro-Asian dialogue forums where new forms of collaboration in investment, technology and infrastructure can be explored. Acting as a consensus facilitator, Spain can strengthen its diplomatic leadership, foster a more balanced vision of relations with China, and consolidate a long-term strategic partnership based on mutual benefit.

Donald Trump's return to the White House has altered the geopolitical landscape, reactivating a protectionist agenda that not only intensifies confrontation with China but also generates trade frictions with the EU. The imposition of tariffs on European products and the



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threat of new barriers have made it clear that Europe cannot rely exclusively on its relationship with the US. This context pushes the EU to seek new economic alliances and strengthen ties with key partners such as China. Spain, in this scenario, has the opportunity to assume a leading role as a mediator and facilitator within the EU, promoting a more balanced and constructive approach toward China. Madrid must act with strategic intelligence:

support the defense of European interests while also leading the pursuit of pragmatic cooperation with a power that will undoubtedly be an essential part of the global future.

Spain and China have achieved remarkable milestones, and the current objective should be to avoid being dragged into the confrontational policies that dominate the international scene. Spain should seize the opportunity to strengthen

a relationship based on mutual respect, economic cooperation and cultural exchange. Betting on China means understanding that the future will be multilateral.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:58:20 PM

CULTURE

When audiences watch the latest adaptation of Beijing People's Art Theatre's *Returning Home on a Snowy Night*, they are introduced to a unique theatrical experience shaped by a minimalist stage design inspired by traditional Chinese opera.

Rather than relying on elaborate realism or cutting-edge technology, the production embraces an abstract, poetic aesthetic that evokes the spiritual depth of traditional Chinese stage craft.

The design captures an ethereal beauty, using soft backdrops that create a dreamlike atmosphere. Flowing, translucent curtains cascade delicately, establishing a light, airy ambience that invokes a sense of purity and tranquility.

Returning Home on a Snowy Night, originally written in 1942 by playwright Wu Zuguang (1917-2003), was first performed by the theater in 1957. The latest adaptation, which premiered on April 25 at the Capital Theatre, an exclusive performance venue belonging to the Beijing People's Art Theatre, will run until May 11.

The play centers around Wei Liansheng, a renowned Peking Opera actor, and explores his journey through the heights of fame and the depths of despair. At the heart of the tragedy is Wei's ill-fated love affair with Yuchun, the concubine of a powerful bureaucrat, a romance that ultimately leads to their untimely deaths.

"The stage at the Beijing People's Art Theatre is often associated with a sense of weight and gravitas," says Feng Yuanzheng, the veteran actor, director and president of the Beijing People's Art Theatre.

"We wanted to break away from that impression and infuse the design with a sense of lightness."

He adds that the production "doesn't simply depict love and hate, or good and bad people. It delves deeply into the complexity of human nature."

"We emphasized love as the central theme, making 'tragic beauty' the emotional core of the play. We also infused it with elements of traditional Chinese culture, reinterpreting the classic from a modern perspective," Feng continues.

Yan Rui, the director of this latest adaptation, elaborates on the vision behind the production.

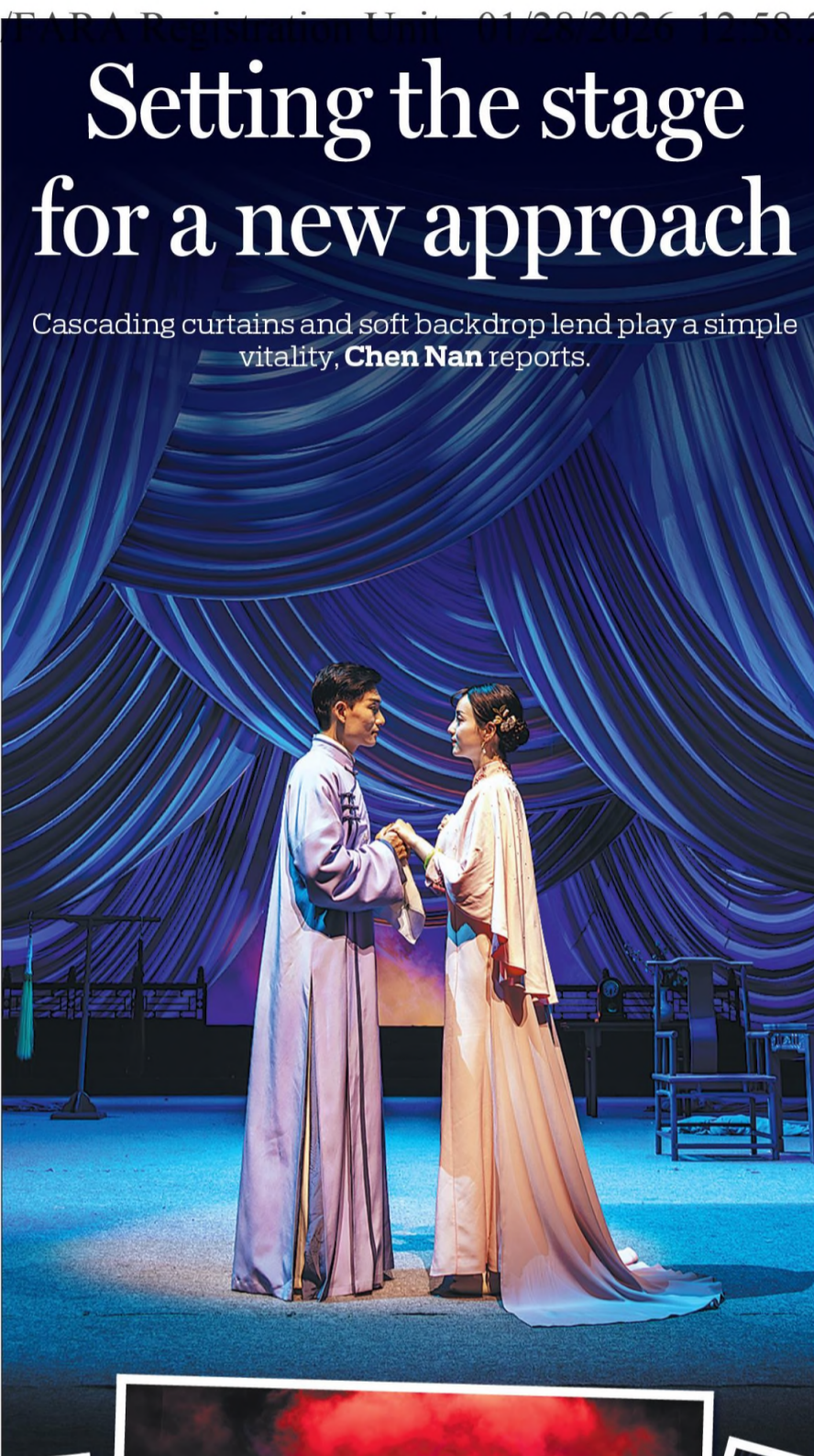
"The language is rich in poetry and carries the background of traditional opera stories, so we wanted to incorporate the elegance and timeless quality of traditional Chinese opera into the performance."

"The stage design elevates the performance, lending a timeless, almost meditative quality to the experience. Sparse props, such as the graceful, shifting curtains, withered trees hanging upside down, minimalist Chinese-style railings and the elegant moon gate collectively evoke the image of a courtyard, a stage and a study."

The performances harmonize with the elements of traditional Chinese opera. The actors' physical movements, gestures and expressions — conveyed primarily through the eyes — allow them to vividly externalize

Setting the stage for a new approach

Cascading curtains and soft backdrop lend play a simple vitality, **Chen Nan** reports.



the characters' inner emotions. These techniques, drawn from Chinese opera's singing, speech, movement and dance, present a deeper connection to the characters, according to Yan.

Liu Heng, a Kunqu actor from the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre, plays the role of Wei, while actress Lu Lu of the Beijing People's Art Theatre portrays Yuchun, Wei's lover.

"In dance, emotions are often amplified through expansive, expressive movements. In traditional Chinese opera, such as Kunqu, emotions are more subtle — controlled, inward, and revealed through stylized gestures," explains 22-year-old Lu, who has been training as a dancer since childhood.

"Yuchun's character embodies an elegant, poetic femininity, shaped by both dance and traditional Chinese opera."

Liu, on the other hand, says that *xiqu* (Chinese opera) is highly formalized, relying on specific conventions such as singing, recitation and gesture.

The actors follow a set pattern of movements and expressions, and their speech is often accompanied by a distinctive singing style, known as *changqiang*, where the tone and pitch can be exaggerated.

In contrast, modern drama places a greater emphasis on naturalistic performance, and actors are expected to convey raw, genuine emotions, often reflecting the inner psychological states of their characters. This contrasts with the stylized and often larger-than-life performances seen in opera.

"Chinese opera has its singing styles and recitations, and is supported by the rhythm of the gongs and drums, relying on stylized movements. But drama, on the other hand, depends entirely on the genuine emotions of the heart," says Liu.

"I tried to reconcile these two forms of performance. Take the lines as an example. In Chinese opera, actors habitually inhale and raise their pitch, but when portraying Wei Liansheng, I need to speak as if I were conversing in everyday life — calmly, with controlled breathing."

According to Feng, this production inherits the abstract and symbolic nature of traditional Chinese opera while reimagining the stage space through the lens of contemporary aesthetics.

It is the first production in the Classic Revival Plan, a new initiative launched earlier this year by the Beijing People's Art Theatre to revive and adapt some of Chinese theater's most iconic works.

"The reinterpretation and new understanding of classics not only injects vitality into old texts, allowing them to resonate with today's audience, but also provides a platform for young actors to learn and grow," says Feng.

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn



Online
Scan the code
to watch the
video.



Top and above: The latest rendition of *Returning Home on a Snowy Night* delves into the complexity of human nature. **Middle:** The play's design delivers a poetic aesthetic. **Right:** The performances incorporate the elegance of traditional Chinese opera.



Above: Flowing curtains cascade delicately, creating a light, airy ambience that invokes a sense of purity and tranquility. **Left:** The minimalist stage design evokes spiritual depth. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China-Serbia hologram exhibition shines light on close ties

BELGRADE — The Serbian Museum of Science and Technology in the heart of Belgrade, Serbia, long known for celebrating industrial and scientific milestones, has taken a bold leap into the future.

Where vintage power systems, early computing devices and a Tesla induction motor once stood as testaments to past innovation, holograms now shimmer in the air, casting their futuristic glow over the old.

A new exhibition titled *Light of Friendship: 70th Anniversary of China-Serbia Friendship in Holography* brings this unique fusion to life, inviting visitors to experience technology and art in brand new ways.

"I'm a frequent visitor here, and this is

something completely new," says Sanjin, a Belgrade resident working in new media art.

"I've never seen holograms like this in person. My favorite part is the dark room with the glass sculptures. They're absolutely stunning."

Organized by the Serbian Museum of Science and Technology and the Holographic Arts Center of the Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, the exhibition includes 70 holographic works, covering themes such as nature, environment and humanity. The series is displayed across the museum's permanent exhibition areas and a dedicated gallery space.

In one corner, a 123-year-old self-playing piano is paired with a holographic musical

score. Nearby, a glowing portrait of Serbian-American scientist Nikola Tesla hovers beside a century-old generator.

In another room, Chinese cultural icons such as a Sanxingdui mask, a blue-and-white porcelain plate and the Big Snowflake torch from the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, float midair, etched by beams of light.

For visitors like Maya and Leila, students from the University of Belgrade, the exhibition has left a strong impression.

They say they have never seen holograms like these before, it is something new for Serbia, and it really shows the connection between their country and China, and they like it very much.

For Sanjin, the implications go far

beyond art appreciation.

"China is so advanced in tech right now, and we don't yet have much of this here," he says.

"This has huge potential, not just culturally, but commercially too. I work in event production, and I can already imagine how many clients would want to use this kind of tech."

Wang Shuo, director of the Holographic Arts Center at the BIGC, says that "light" was chosen as the exhibition's theme to symbolize the enduring connection between China and Serbia — reflected in the artworks' integration of both cultures, the collaboration behind the exhibition and the promise of future exchanges.

"The exhibition is filled with passion and

creativity. There's an invisible spirit behind this kind of cooperation. Just like holography — when a beam of light shines on it, energy bursts forth," says Wang.

The museum's director, Zoran Levic, describes the event as a landmark moment.

"It's the first time Serbian visitors are seeing and interacting with holographic artworks."

"Our museum is known for showcasing old technology. So this meeting of old and new is very special," adds Levic.

"To predict the future, you must first know the past. The past is here, and the future is hanging on the walls."

XINHUA

LIFE



Left: The Zisun tea ritual is a highlight during any stay at Xu Dan's rural abode in Changxing county of Huzhou, Zhejiang province. **Middle:** Another homestay offers creative local cuisine and camping in Changxing. **Right:** Flowers shaped from ginkgo leaves are popular with guests at Xu Xianfeng's homestay in Changxing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rural homestay boom written in tea leaves

Guesthouse owners create immersive cultural experiences to attract urbanites, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Huzhou, Zhejiang.

Tucked away amid towering trees in Shuikou village, Xu Dan's homestay attracts an uninterrupted flow of urban residents seeking serenity and tradition.

At the main courtyard of her rural abode in Changxing county of Huzhou city in East China's Zhejiang province, lies a tranquil pool so clear that it resembles a mirror of the sky, with a small wooden boat gently drifting.

Arched stone bridges span the water to link scattered courtyards and winding paths that meander through miniature artificial mountains, each rock carefully placed to echo the harmony of classic Chinese gardens.

Tea artisans in flowing robes perform age-old rituals — steeping, pouring, and presenting the tea with graceful movements.

Guests are welcomed not only with warmth but also a ceremonial tea treat: a trio of flavors, each steeped in meaning.

"The sweet tea, crafted from fragrant osmanthus blossoms and delicate tangerine slices, symbolizes an abundant and joyful life. The salty tea is a mix of smoked beans, dried carrots, sesame seeds, orange peel, and crushed tea leaves that honors the toil of harvest and the earth's richness," Xu says as she warmly welcomes guests in late April.

Finally, the plain tea, simple and pure, lingers with a fresh aftertaste that evokes the essence of true friendship — like plain tea, friendship should be honest and unadorned, needing no embellishment to be deeply appreciated, she explains.

"Guests have shown a strong desire to pay more for the tea experiences we arrange," Xu says.

Born and raised in the village, the woman in her 30s started blending her homestay with intangible cultural heritage, particularly tea culture, in 2023.

"This idea came about because my uncle is a national-level inheritor of the local tea-making craft and its profound history," she explains.

Zisun tea originates from Chang-

xing and boasts a history of over 1,200 years. It used to be highly prized and designated as an imperial tribute tea during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

Crafted through meticulous traditional techniques, Zisun tea is distinguished by its fine, tender buds, subtle purplish hue, and shape resembling bamboo shoots — hence its name, which means "purple bamboo shoot" tea.

To integrate tea culture into the guest experience, Xu pays attention to the environment and activities.

"Each of the 16 rooms in two buildings is stocked with Zisun tea and has a designated tea-tasting area," she says.

"On every floor, there are books about tea and collections of essays from local authors. Guests can enjoy tea while reading, which creates a quiet, immersive experience."

She also hosts interactive events to deepen visitors' engagement.

"I organize activities like Song Dynasty (960-1279) tea-whisking demonstrations, tea cake-making workshops, and modern tea-blending sessions," she says.

Currently, it's tea-picking season and guests can participate in harvesting the leaves.

The tea culture theme has noticeably upgraded her business.

The homestay has been a family business since 2014, when her mother opened a farmhouse-style inn. It evolved into a fine agritourism experience when Xu took over in 2018 after quitting her product development job in Hangzhou, the provincial capital.

"I saw huge growth potential and wanted to incorporate my creative ideas into traditional culture," she says.

Her efforts in cultural enhancement have improved the homestay's overall quality, which has brought guests of diverse backgrounds.

"Previously, most of my visitors were elderly," she says.

"Now, we're seeing more families and younger seniors. The guests have a greater awareness of culture," she notes.

Her homestay is among more



Changxing villagers showcase glutinous rice pastry infused with flower petals.



A visitor experiences making pastry.

than 500 in the village, many of which have cashed in on the integration of rural culture and tourism over the years.

"Nearly every household is involved. This makes it the largest rural tourism cluster in northern Zhejiang," says Zhang Yuhua, the

first secretary of the rural homestay industry association in Shuikou. The village attracted over 4.5 million visitors last year, generating about 1.5 billion yuan (\$205.6 million) in tourism revenue.

Most visitors come from major cities within a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Changxing, including Shanghai and Hangzhou, as well as Nanjing in Jiangsu province.

Homestays have evolved with tourists' preferences, considering emotional value or how the experience makes visitors feel, says Zhang.

In addition to popular in-house entertainment like poker and karaoke, villagers have connected nearby scenic spots within a 1.5-hour radius.

"Guests stay and eat in Shuikou, but we help them explore the surrounding areas," Zhang says, adding that the arrangement attracts many visitors to stay for at least three days.

The diverse themes have added richness to Shuikou's rural tourism tapestry.

"Each place has its unique characteristics, which makes Shuikou a sustainable and beloved destination," he says.

About a three-minute walk from Xu's place, Xu Xianfeng's homestay was built after he decided to imbue his operations of ginkgo elements in 2020 when business was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The transformation was more than cosmetic. It was built around a deep connection to local culture and natural resources.

"We're surrounded by ginkgo trees, so the theme of our homestay is all about ginkgo: its flowers, photo albums, leaves, and more," Xu Xianfeng explains.

Even the food and drinks reflect this theme.

"We serve ginkgo milk tea and ginkgo fruit powder hand-prepared by my wife. They're free not only for our guests but also anyone who dines with us," he says.

As he welcomes visitors to the

homestay, he enthusiastically shares samples of the local year-round offerings, ranging from dried ginkgo nuts and bamboo shoots to peanuts.

The themed experiences tug at the heartstrings of urban travelers, many of whom have shared their experiences on social media platform Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, which helps attract more visitors.

The seven rooms of his homestay and the dining room were at full capacity during the May Day holiday.

"Over 80 percent of our guests are families with children. When kids get a change of scenery, they put their phones down because they can engage with nature all day," Xu Xianfeng notes.

One of the most popular cultural experiences he offers is making ginkgo leaf picture frames.

"We use flower preservatives so the ginkgo leaves stay vibrant for up to two months. The guests say they acquire a sense of belonging to nature," he says.

The homestay has attracted a loyal following.

"Last year, a guest tried making a ginkgo flower project but failed, so I gave her one of ours. She was really touched and came back this year with her friends," he says.

This kind of emotional connection, he says, is "what makes the work fulfilling".

Looking forward, Xu Dan, the owner of the tea-themed homestay, says she plans to create more youth-oriented spaces and collaborate with more educators to run a family-style study program that taps deeper into the history and craft of Zisun tea.

"I'm developing a leisure zone tailored for younger people with activities like camping and barbecuing," she explains.

"As the number of young visitors to our village rises, I want to offer meaningful experiences," she says.

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Celebrated French actress praises Chinese audience's warm welcome

By **CHEN NAN**
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During an event at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on April 24, Isabelle Huppert, the celebrated French actress known for her profound, complex performances, received a question from a curious fan.

"Have you ever considered launching a career in China?" she asked, prompting a big smile from Huppert.

Rather than using grandiose language to envision the future, Huppert's plan is practical: "If I ever get the chance to work in China, I think the first thing I'd do is learn more Chinese."

The French actress has recently become active in China. Her performance as Lyubov in the French production of Anton Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, which toured Chinese cities in April, including Nanjing in Jiangsu province, Shanghai and Beijing — received warm feedback from audiences. She also participated in a masterclass at the 15th Beijing International Film Festival.

Last December, she performed in the US playwright Tennessee Willi-



Left: French actress Isabelle Huppert at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on April 24. **Right:** A scene from *The Cherry Orchard*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ams' play *The Glass Menagerie* at the NCPA.

"The audience response was incredibly enthusiastic, so I'm looking forward to returning to Beijing," Huppert says.

She notes that the language barrier creates a magical chemistry. "French and Chinese are very different languages. During the performance, we could feel the audience listening attentively to each line. I felt a very delicate, intimate connection with them."

The French production of *The Cherry Orchard* premiered on July 5, 2021, and was directed by Portuguese director Tiago Rodrigues as the opening show of the world-famous 15th Festival d'Avignon.

Lyubov portrayed by Huppert, is a woman who returns to the family estate after living in Paris for years. The cherry orchard, where she and her brother grew up, is about to be sold to pay off debt.

"To be honest, I don't really focus on specific acting techniques, nor do



I follow any particular method. What matters most is the free expression of myself, which is also built on thorough communication with the director and screenwriter. Each time I take on a new role it feels like meeting a new friend. I get to know and understand her," says Huppert when asked about her acting techniques.

She also notes that before arriving in China for this tour, this version of *The Cherry Orchard* had already been staged in several countries.

Although there were no major changes in its overall direction, the cast and crew continuously refined and reflected on the details over three years.

As a result, the performance presented to Chinese audiences is deeply infused with the accumulated experience and insights from those earlier stages.

French actor Gregoire Monsaignon, who portrays Pishchik, a landowner constantly struggling with finances but still a comical charac-

ter, says he felt the Chinese audience's passion during the tour.

"The lighthearted, humorous parts of the play transcended language barriers and were communicated and received very well," he says. "This attention from the Chinese audiences made us very happy. I hope that while watching the performance everyone focuses on Chekhov's classic work and reflects on the relationship between the characters and the world, including the relationship between us as individuals and the world."

Huppert, born in 1953 in Paris, has long been celebrated for roles that demand emotional depth and intellectual acuity. She made her screen debut in *Faustine and the Beautiful Summer* in 1972. By the mid-1970s, she had made more than 15 films. In 1978, she won Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival for her performance in *Violette Noziete*, and drew critical acclaim for her performance in *Elle* (2016), for which she earned her first Golden Globe Award for Best Actress and her first Academy Award nomination.

"Film and theater are two completely different modes of performance, but there's no real difference to me," she says.

Poetry recital celebrates cultural splendor

DHAKA — Through a series of wonderful performances, including poetry recitation, calligraphy displays, and stage performances, the Bangladesh Chinese Poetry Recitation Competition was successfully held recently in Dhaka.

It attracted more than 100 Chinese language learners. After preliminary selections, 12 contestants advanced to the individual finals, and nine teams to the group finals.

"My favorite Chinese poet is Li Bai," says Amina Tun Tiyaba, the winner of the individual category.

Having studied Chinese for more than three years at the University of Dhaka, she can now recite poems and has already begun to appreciate the artistic conception and beauty embedded in Chinese poetry.

"In the future, I hope to learn and understand more Chinese poems, and experience the poetic charm and elegance of traditional Chinese culture through poetry," she adds.

"I think the nobility and serenity of Chinese poems influence me deeply," says Sanjida Anwar, who was part of a team with classmates.

"Whether in terms of expression, stage performances, or the understanding of the poems, today's competition was truly impressive," says Yang Hui, Chinese director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Dhaka.

"This has also inspired us to adopt more diverse methods in future teaching, to enrich the learning experience and deepen interest in, and understanding of, Chinese culture," she adds.

Bulbul Ashraf Siddiqi, director of the Confucius Institute at the North South University, says that learning a language is not just about words — it's about understanding a culture and a way of life. It can open new paths for the future and even change lives.

"Keep your passion for language learning alive," Siddiqi says, adding that "the future belongs to the East. Be prepared for it, and keep improving your skill in foreign languages".

Sayema Haque Bidisha, province-chancellor of the University of Dhaka, says that it is important to acknowledge and remind that Chinese history and culture are among the oldest in the world. At the same time, the people of Bangladesh also have a long-standing history, rich culture, and strong heritage.

"There are many similarities between the cultural aspects of our two countries," she says. "It is important to understand each other's cultures, because culture plays a crucial role when we talk about building a peaceful, harmonious world based on friendship, mutual collaboration, and dialogue."

Li Shaopeng, cultural counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh, says that the enthusiasm and talent of the young generation show how language and culture can bring people closer.

This year marks 50 years of diplomatic ties between China and Bangladesh, and the year of people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, Li says, adding that the contestants' voices — their poems — were part of a bigger story: one of friendship, learning and shared dreams.

Hosted by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation under the Ministry of Education of China, the event was overseen by the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh, and organized by the Confucius Institute at the University of Dhaka, the Confucius Institute at North South University, the Shanto Mariam-Honghe Confucius Classroom, and the Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Dhaka.



Left: Wang Yongxian sits in front of the preserved millennia-old Yingxian Wooden Pagoda in Yingxian county, Shuozhou, Shanxi province. He was instrumental in the tower's restoration. Right: Giving a class on social media, the 75-year-old craftsman introduces *dougong*, or interlocking wooden brackets, online. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Interlocking past with present

Determined to keep traditions alive, heritage-based architect finds new medium of expression, and a growing audience, after retiring, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Bathed in the honeyed glow of the mid-March sun, 75-year-old Wang Yongxian explains the millennia-old Yingxian Wooden Pagoda to his 1.5 million followers in a video, as if introducing an old friend.

"This isn't just wood and nails, but a living record of Chinese ingenuity," says the man who drove more than three hours from his home in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province, to visit the towering marvel of engineering.

A retired structural engineer and cultural heritage expert, Wang has dedicated his retirement years to a new kind of preservation: digital storytelling. In the past two years, he has taken to livestreaming to introduce young viewers to the ancient knowledge embedded in China's architectural relics.

Today, his subject is one of the world's tallest and oldest all-wooden pagodas, which was built in 1056 and has miraculously withstood centuries of war, weather, and earthquakes. As he manipulates a scaled-down replica of the pagoda and zooms in on the graceful overhangs on each tier, Wang explains how, in the absence of nails, interlocking wooden brackets known as *dougong*, a technique perfected over centuries, account for flexibility and endurance.

Wang has formed a special bond with the pagoda since he became involved in its protection and restoration in the early 1990s.

"This historical wooden pagoda is a rare treasure shaped by the passage of time, bearing the weight of culture and the knowledge of our ancestors. However, centuries of wind, frost, rain, snow, and earthquakes have left it scarred and weathered. Today, its structural safety faces serious challenges," he says.

One of the most contentious issues, Wang explains in the video, is whether to implement a full dismantling and overhaul of the pagoda, which some believe is the only way to fully address the risks posed by its age and increasing tilt.

But Wang is firmly against it. "A complete dismantling would be disastrous," he warns, adding that such an approach carries four major dangers, ranging from the loss of historical information and structural safety, to impairment of the pagoda's authenticity and spirit, and violation of legal principles.

"The wooden components contain a wealth of historical data — craftsmanship, signs of wear, marks of the era. Replacing any of these during dismantling means that irreplaceable historical evidence is lost forever," Wang says.

"Plus, it is a masterpiece of traditional mortise-and-tenon architecture. Dismantling it requires exceptional skill. A single mistake during reassembly could lead to irreversible structural damage," he adds.

Additionally, China's newly revised cultural relics protection law demands minimal intervention and prohibits altering a heritage site's original state, he says.

Years of experience have led Wang to come up with a careful alternative: the traditional correction and restoration approach, which can help correct the pagoda's tilt without taking it apart.



Wang demonstrates how, in the absence of nails, interlocking wooden brackets known as *dougong*, a technique perfected over centuries, ensure flexibility and endurance. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou is among the ancient buildings that Wang has helped preserve and restore. Its style is representative of Shanxi architecture. TIAN XIAOXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

"This plan avoids disassembly, preserves the structure's original state, and addresses the root safety concerns," he says, adding that it could significantly cut costs, and shorten repair time while retaining the greatest amount of historical authenticity.

Born and raised in Shanxi, Wang became involved in the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings in 1972. His footsteps have echoed through the halls of many of the iconic historic sites across the province, including Foguang Temple in Wutai county, Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou, and the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda.

Shanxi boasts the highest number of ancient architectural relics in China, and is home to more than 28,000 sites, among them more than 82 percent of the country's surviving wooden structures built during or before the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

"These structures represent a vast and invaluable cultural inheritance passed down by our ancestors," Wang says.

However, the sheer volume of

ancient buildings has made preservation a formidable challenge. Many of them have suffered from years of neglect and severe deterioration.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, cultural heritage authorities have initiated large-scale rescue and restoration efforts to protect irreplaceable assets. For decades, Wang has been at the forefront of this mission.

He has contributed to the surveying, mapping, conservation planning, and restoration of many national level protected sites built from the Tang (618-907), and Song (960-1279) to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

Among his most notable achievements, he was chief organizer and participant in the full-scale disassembly and restoration of the Shengmu (Holy Mother) Hall at the Song Dynasty Jinci Temple in Taiyuan, as well as the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou.

Both projects involved the development of systematic conservation strategies and the resolution of complex structural issues, including foun-

the invaluable techniques he learned from veteran craftsmen, he wrote a series of books and academic papers to document traditional restoration methods.

He also began teaching a course on conservation and restoration of ancient buildings at Taiyuan Normal University.

His students' enthusiasm for the subject encouraged him to explore new ways of making ancient architecture more accessible, especially to the younger generation.

At their suggestion, Wang started a social media account called *Dougong Class* about two years ago.

For the man in his 70s, entering the world of vlogging was no small feat but with guidance from his grandson, he has learned how to operate filming equipment, edit videos, and share content online.

But mastering technology was just the first challenge. "I couldn't just recite complex theory," Wang says. "I had to make it fun, make it understandable — only then would people listen."

So he began using models that could be dismantled and hand-drawn diagrams to break down complicated architectural elements like *dougong* brackets, hip-and-gable roofs, and large beam structures.

His accessible and creative approach quickly captured public attention. In 2023, the viral success of the video game *Black Myth: Wukong* sparked a surge of interest in traditional architecture.

Wang's account rode the wave, picking up over 20 million views and helping cultivate an online community of architecture enthusiasts.

So far, his videos have amassed more than 80 million views across different platforms.

Yang Xiaofan, an architecture student from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is one of Wang's followers.

"His videos dissect every bracket set ... helping me grasp not just the 'how' but the 'why,'" Yang says.

Du Yushi from Liaoning province says she binge-watched Wang's videos before visiting Shanxi. "Seeing the Jinci Temple brackets in person after his explanations made the trip unforgettable."

Wang's wife Yao Zi'e is also supportive of his work. "A fulfilling life leaves the world better. This work gives him purpose — you see it in his energy and health," she says.

Wang also passed the driver's license in 2023 to better access heritage sites, most of which are tucked away off the beaten track.

Speaking of his drive for teaching after retirement, Wang says he'd like to help preserve the vanishing techniques of master craftsmen.

"It pains me to see irreplaceable skills fade away with their practitioners," says the man who describes himself as having the spirit of a 20-year-old. "I'm rooted in tradition but embrace new ways."

"To me, blackboard and camera lens serve the same purpose, both are vehicles for passing on knowledge. The stage has just grown bigger, and with it, my responsibility."

Though he officially retired from the Shanxi bureau in 2000, Wang didn't leave work behind. Drawing on decades of field experience and

the invaluable techniques he learned from veteran craftsmen, he wrote a series of books and academic papers to document traditional restoration methods.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2025

Beijing, Moscow to deepen partnership

Leaders agree to strengthen strategic coordination, firmly defend intl justice

By MO JINGXI in Moscow mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Russia issued a joint statement on Thursday on further deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, agreeing to push forward the high-level development of bilateral ties, uphold a correct historical perspective on World War II, and firmly defend international fairness and justice.

The statement was jointly signed by President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin following their talks in Moscow.

The two heads of state witnessed the exchange of more than 20 bilateral cooperation documents covering such areas as global strategic stability, upholding the authority of international law, biosecurity, investment protection, the digital economy, quarantine and film cooperation.

Xi arrived in Moscow on Wednesday, his 11th visit to the neighboring country since becoming president, for a state visit and to attend celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War. This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the victories in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War.

The two heads of state have met more than 40 times on different occasions over the years.

"The foundation of political mutual trust between China and Russia has grown deeper, the ties of practical cooperation have become stronger, and cultural and local exchanges have flourished," Xi said, noting that China-Russia relations are more composed, confident, stable and resilient in the new era.

Xi called on the two countries to continue with the general direction of cooperation, eliminate external interference, and make the foundation of cooperation more solid and the momentum for progress more abundant.

China and Russia should leverage the complementary advantages of the two countries' resources and industrial systems to expand high-quality and mutually beneficial cooperation in areas such as trade and economy, energy, agriculture, aerospace and artificial intelligence, Xi said.

The two countries should synergize the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union, to provide a platform for promoting high-standard connectivity, he said.

In 2024, bilateral trade rose to \$244.8 billion, making China the



President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands on Thursday at the Kremlin in Moscow after signing a joint statement on further deepening the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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largest trading partner of Russia for 15 consecutive years. Furthermore, in December last year, the China-Russia east-route natural gas pipeline was fully completed.

Xi also urged the two sides to enhance coordination and cooperation on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS to unite the Global South, uphold genuine multilateralism and guide global governance reform in the right direction.

As China is striving to build itself into a great modern socialist country in all respects, and is advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts, Xi said that China is determined and confident in overcoming various risks and challenges, and will steadfastly manage its own affairs well regardless of changes in the external environment.

He expressed China's readiness to work together with Russia to shoulder



President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin arrive at the Kremlin on Thursday for talks. WANG YE / XINHUA

the special responsibilities entrusted by the times, maintain the global multilateral trading system, and ensure the stability and smooth operation of industrial and supply chains.

This will contribute more significantly to the development and revitalization of both countries and the safeguarding of international fairness and justice, Xi said.

Putin, who received Xi with a welcoming ceremony on Thursday morning, said he was truly delighted to see Xi again and sincerely valued the opportunity to speak with him personally.

"I am grateful that, just as you did 10 years ago for the previous anniversary, you have chosen to join us in commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Great Victory, which our nation holds sacred," he said.

Putin said that amid today's complex geopolitical environment and global uncertainty, the Russia-China relationship is a crucial stabilizing factor on the international stage and undoubtedly a model of state-to-state relations in the 21st century.

Russia-China relations are built on the principles of equality, mutual benefit and respect for each other's interests and sovereignty, and are not directed against any third party, he said.

Putin added that imposing high tariffs goes against common sense and is illegal, and will only backfire.

He also said he will be delighted to make an official visit to China for the commemorative events marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the end of World War II.

"The military brotherhood forged between our nations during those difficult wartime years remains a cornerstone of today's comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation between Russia and China," he said.

Xi praises Chinese, Russian cultural exchanges

President Xi Jinping extended congratulations on Wednesday to a China-Russia people-to-people and cultural exchange event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victories in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War.

In his message, Xi pointed out that 80 years ago, the Chinese people and the Russian people jointly

made indelible historical contributions to the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and forged an unbreakable great friendship with blood, laying a solid foundation for the high-level development of bilateral relations.

Xi said that 80 years later, with the joint efforts of both sides, China-Russia relations have demonstrated renewed vitality and forged a new model of major-country relations.

He emphasized that strengthening people-to-people and cultural exchanges is of great and far-reaching significance for enhancing mutual understanding, promoting good-neighborliness and friendship, and consolidating social and popular support for the development of bilateral ties.

The Chinese president said that he hopes media outlets of both countries will join hands to forge ahead with a shared mission and carry out warm and down-to-earth people-to-people and cultural exchanges that connect people's hearts, in order to inject new momentum into mutual understanding and amity between the two peoples, refresh the development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, and make new contributions to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

The event was co-hosted by China Media Group and All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Co.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also sent a congratulatory message to the event on Wednesday.

XINHUA

Strong trade, economic cooperation benefits all

China and Russia have maintained normal trade and economic relations for decades, despite some twists and turns. Such stable relations are not only beneficial for both countries but are also necessary for the stability of the world economy.

Bound by strong, long-term trade and economic ties, the two nations offer each other complementary advantages. China has been Russia's largest trading partner since

WORLD WATCH

By Sergey Suverov

2010. Bilateral trade reached a record \$245 billion in 2024, a 2 percent year-on-year growth.

Russia remains the leading exporter of oil to China. According to China's General Administration of Customs, Russian oil deliveries totaled 108.5 million metric tons in 2024, accounting for approximately 20 percent of China's total oil imports. Rosneft, the largest supplier of Russian oil to China, accounts for roughly half of these volumes.

Rosneft became the first Russian company to sign unprecedented long-term energy supply contracts with Chinese partners.

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Enhanced Sino-EU relations to stabilize world economy

By WANG KEJU wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

In the face of the United States' sweeping tariffs, enhanced cooperation between China and the European Union serves as a critical counterweight to Washington's unilateral tariff measures, which are disrupting the rules-based global trading system, and provides a stabilizing force for the world economy, analysts said.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of China-EU diplomatic ties — a milestone that analysts said Beijing and Brussels should capitalize on to strengthen communications and resolve pending issues, and take their relationship to new heights.

The US has slapped steep tariffs on friends and foes, using such levies as bargaining chips to force other economies to make deals. Both the EU and China are feeling the brunt of the tariffs.

"China and the EU recognize that in the face of rising protectionism,

they have a shared interest in preserving the rules-based global order," said Li Daokui, director of Tsinghua University's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking.

"By aligning positions and pooling influence, Beijing and Brussels can push back against the forces of unilateralism and fragmentation," Li said.

This interdependence, far from being mere rhetoric, is mirrored in the robust trade relationship that binds the two economies. The General Administration of Customs said China's trade with the EU reached 1.3 trillion yuan (\$179.6 billion) in the first quarter, up 1.4 percent year-on-year.

This means that China and the EU are engaging in over 80 million yuan worth of trade activity every minute.

On April 27, the first China-Europe freight train for e-commerce in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, loaded with goods such as 3D printers and game controller accessories, departed from Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for

a 15-day journey to Budapest, Hungary. This new rail service will operate one or two times per week.

"China and the EU possess strong economic complementarity, thanks to China's robust manufacturing capabilities and vast domestic market, and Europe's strengths in high-end manufacturing, services and technological innovation," said Liu Ying, a researcher at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

Liu said the shared commitment of China and the EU to green transition lays a strong foundation to deepen their economic and technological cooperation, particularly in green development and the digital economy.

During a video call in April, Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic agreed to immediately start negotiations on EV price undertakings, as well as issues related to bilateral investment cooperation in the auto sector.

Wang Lingjun, deputy head of the General Administration of Customs, said, "With their combined economic size exceeding one-third of the global total, China and the EU are both champions of economic globalization and trade liberalization, as well as steadfast supporters of the World Trade Organization."

The close communication and joint actions by China and the EU to uphold free and open trade and investment — as well as maintaining the stability and smooth operation of global industrial and supply chains — will inject more stability and certainty into their own economies and the world economy, Wang said.

XI'S VISIT

China's key role in WWII overlooked

Resistance against Japanese aggression major contribution to victory of Allied forces

By ZHENG WANYIN in London
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

China's resistance against Japanese aggression during World War II was a major contribution to the victory achieved by the Allied forces led by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. Yet 80 years after the end of the brutal war, China's role still remains poorly understood in the West, said Rana Mitter, a British historian and the author of the book *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*.

China was the main theater in the East during the World Anti-Fascist War.

On July 7, 1937, Japanese soldiers attacked Chinese forces at the Lugou Bridge, marking the beginning of Japan's full-scale invasion of China and China's whole-nation resistance against the Japanese aggression.

But China's suffering can be traced back six years earlier to the September 18 Incident in 1931, when Japanese forces stationed in north-eastern China blew up a section of the railway near Liutiaohu in Shenyang, Liaoning province, falsely accused the Chinese military of doing it and used the incident as a pretext to bombard the city.

"The period from 1937 to 1939 is one of the most important periods for China's wartime resistance," Mitter said. "In fact, I said this before, I say it again, there is a very important turning point in 1938, where it is possible that China could have surrendered to the Japanese and would have gotten some kind of deal, but that would have meant that the whole of the war would be different."

Had China kneeled down, Japan would essentially have treated China as a colony, and its focus would also have been freed up for an all-out assault on the Soviet Union, Southeast Asia or even British India, Mitter pointed out.

"For that reason, there is a genuinely global significance to the war in China, but it still isn't widely known as I think it should be."

While there has been an improved awareness of the importance of China's wartime experiences, WWII, to date, is still largely considered a war centered in Europe, said Mitter, who began planning the book in the early 2000s and published his work in 2013.

"Overall, part of the problem is to do with dating. It is still the case that the European war is considered to be the beginning of World War II, starting in September 1939 (the Nazi's invasion of Poland). That means, for many people, the events that came before from 1937 to 1939 in China don't really count as part of the main war," he said.

Likewise, while many Europeans are familiar with the Blitz in London, the mass air attacks conducted by the Germans from 1940 to 1941, few have heard of the parallel Japanese bombing of Chongqing, China's temporary capital in wartime, and nearby cities from 1938 to 1944, Mitter said.

"Many do not realize that China



Guests view a photo exhibition commemorating the 80th anniversary of China's victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War in Moscow, Russia, on April 18. CAO YANG / XINHUA

“There is a genuinely global significance to the war in China, but it still isn't widely known as I think it should be.”



Rana Mitter, British historian and author of the book *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*

played any sort of role in World War II at all," he wrote in the book's prologue. "Those who are aware of China's involvement often dismiss it as a secondary theater... China's role in the war is a historical byway, not worthy of the full examination that is the due of the major powers involved."

Alongside the resistance, China's story is also about how its institutions, societal culture, way of life and many bottom-up aspects were changed by the legacy of the prolonged war, a process Mitter spent 10 years piecing together, which could help the world understand China today.

Yet, history is on the verge of slipping away, especially as more veterans and witnesses pass on, at a time when reviving the collective memory of the East and the West standing against darkness is even more urgent than it was over 10 years ago when the book was released, Mitter said.

"Today, Asia has essentially been at peace, at least in terms of international conflict, for more than four decades, but that didn't happen by accident. It happened because, in the end, partly through chance and planning, the major actors in the region have managed to come to deals, compromises, agreements and pacts with each other. That means that all-out war has been avoided. That's not true in the Middle East. It's no longer true in Europe. It isn't true in Africa," he said.

"Maintaining that peace is immensely important. It's important for trade, for economic growth in the world and for dealing with climate change. Most of all, it's important because what learning about the war and the war of resistance tells you is the sheer cost in human lives, as well as the damage and destruction that it causes to the social fabric and to the ability of people to build a peaceful and prosperous life."

"War is disruptive to everything. For that reason, it's vitally important that regions find ways to make sure that they turn to negotiation and discussion and avoid conflict or military actions as a means of solving disputes. What the war shows is that, in the end, it causes huge destruction, and it doesn't answer the questions that need to be answered."



Chinese peacekeepers to South Sudan march in formation at a medal-awarding ceremony in South Sudan on Oct 3, 2024. A total of 700 Chinese peacekeepers were awarded the UN Peace Medal of Honor. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Nation promoting peace amid worldwide conflicts

By XING YI in London
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In a world marked by persistent conflicts, China has consistently promoted a vision of global peace rooted in diplomacy, development and multilateralism, and it has actively engaged in peacemaking, increasingly emerging as a stabilizing force in global affairs, experts said.

"China is the only major power that has been able to develop peacefully," said Ben Norton, founder and editor of Geopolitical Economy Report, an online news analysis website.

The United States has been involved in more than 250 foreign military interventions since 1991, said Norton, citing data from the US Congressional Research Service.

"In contrast, China has not fought in a war since 1979. That's extremely important and very unique," he said, adding that the path to prosperity for major European powers such as Britain and France was built on colonization and conflict.

"China on the global stage has been working with other countries in the Global South to oppose wars and to strengthen multilateral institutions that can actually ensure peace," Norton added.

When it comes to ongoing crises such as the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, "the US is stoking many of these conflicts," Norton said, noting the billions of dollars of weapons and military support Washington

has sent to Ukraine and Israel.

In contrast, China has called for a political settlement for the Russia-Ukraine crisis through dialogue and negotiation from the very beginning. It also issued China's peace plan in 2023, and jointly issued the "six common understandings" and formed the "Friends for Peace" group on the Ukraine crisis with Brazil and other Global South nations last year.

Regarding the Gaza crisis, China released its position paper in November 2023, calling for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the fighting to ensure that the humanitarian corridors are safe and unimpeded, and to prevent the expansion of the conflict. In 2024, China brokered the signing of a unity agreement between 14 Palestinian political parties, promoting reconciliation within Palestine and creating conditions for ending the Gaza conflict.

Zheng Yu, chair of the Department of International Politics at Fudan University, emphasized that China's global security approach today is deeply rooted in its own historical experience, while offering an alternative to Western, especially US-led, security frameworks.

Zheng pointed to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, first proposed in 1954, as the bedrock of China's foreign policy: mutual respect for sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

“China on the global stage has been working with other countries in the Global South to oppose wars and to strengthen multilateral institutions.”

Ben Norton, founder and editor of Geopolitical Economy Report

"First articulated by Chinese leaders in 1954 and then accepted by the overwhelming majority of countries in developing state-to-state relations, the Five Principles is one of the most important contributions to world peace," Zheng said.

As China's comprehensive strength continues to rise, its peaceful path has evolved from "only focusing on managing its own affairs" to "more proactively contributing to global governance," according to Zheng, which is reflected in the three global initiatives proposed by China in recent years.

The Global Security Initiative, proposed in 2022, has expanded the Five Principles by offering a common, comprehensive and

cooperative approach to achieve sustainable peace, Zheng said.

"Peace is not just the absence of war," he elaborated. "It must be supported by enduring mechanisms that promote continued cooperation and mutual trust."

According to Zheng, traditional Western security doctrines, often rooted in realism, tends to focus on maximizing national power, even at the expense of others' security — a mindset that has historically led to arms races and strategic anxiety.

By contrast, China's vision of "common security" sees the world as an interconnected whole, so "our security cannot come at the cost of others' insecurity," said Zheng, adding this cooperative mindset seeks to break the logic of zero-sum competition.

China's peace-oriented role is particularly visible in the Global South, where many countries see Beijing not only as an economic partner, but also as a counterweight to Western dominance, said Norton, who has spent many years as a journalist reporting from Latin America.

While Western media often overlooks China's peacekeeping efforts and contributions to nuclear non-proliferation and counterterrorism, Norton argued that much of the world recognizes them.

"In the West, there's a lot of misinformation and bias against China," he said. "In Latin America and Africa, China is viewed by many as a positive force for peace and stability."

Globalization efforts counter protectionist policies

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong and JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo

Amid geopolitical tensions and fresh economic headwinds arising from US trade tariffs, China continues to support globalization and multilateralism, serving as a propeller for the world economy, experts say.

"China's role and significance as a key defender and driver of the future global economy and multilateralism are growing more important than ever," said Yangchoon Kwak, a senior specially appointed professor at Rikkyo University's College of Economics in Japan.

Kwak said the world is witnessing an "incomprehensible reversal" as the United States, which used to advocate a capitalist trade order of "freedom, nondiscrimination and multilateralism" after World War II, has now advanced protectionist policies under the slogan of "America First".

In contrast, China has moved to defend free trade as it increasingly takes on the characteristics of an advanced economy, Kwak noted.

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has played an active role in economic globalization. The country has made numerous efforts in reform and opening-up, with its overall tariff rate dropping from 15.3 percent in 2001 to 7.3 percent now,

according to a white paper released by the State Council Information Office in April.

As the world's second-largest economy, China has accounted for about 30 percent of global economic growth annually in recent years, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

China has not only contributed to globalization and multilateralism, but has also sought to reform the system to make it more balanced and inclusive for international cooperation, according to the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies.

The institute noted that China-proposed projects such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative have been covenants of principles and frameworks of real multilateralism.

The US has imposed a crushing 44 percent "reciprocal tariff" on earthquake-hit Myanmar, and the institute said the Southeast Asian country needs to work with its partners to face the challenge.

For example, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a free-trade pact that brings together the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and five major trading partners, including China, will bring trade growth, connectivity, expanded market access and infrastructure

upgrades, the institute said.

"The United States is a country that the global economy cannot ignore at present, but it is not a country upon which the global economy must depend forever," said Hidetoshi Tashiro, chief economist at Japanese consultancy Infinity LLC.

As countries across the world face tariff hikes by the US, Tashiro said international justice might have been completely buried by Washington's actions if China had not stood firm in advocating for international justice.

"If international justice is lost, poor nations with limited populations and scarce resources will forever be unable to assert any demands on the global stage," said Tashiro, adding that China is upholding the idea of a multilateral economic order while working to establish a new basis for it.

With Japan-China trade expanded under the RCEP, Tashiro said China has overtaken the US as the largest export destination for Japanese sake, or rice wine, and Chinese companies have begun acquiring Japanese sake producers.

"Many people overlook the fact that consumers in all countries choose to obtain the best value at the lowest cost, rather than prioritizing 'Made in China,'" said Kang Ho-gu, director of the Sino-Korea Economy/Society Institute.

The essence of free trade is mutual and fair, and China is also facing competitive pressure due to rising costs, said Kang, who is also a visiting professor of the Graduate School of International Studies at Chung-Ang University in South Korea.

"Against this backdrop, China still advocates free trade, which demonstrates its willingness to engage in fair competition with other nations and its commitment to improving the whole human society," Kang said.

Noting that China has said that there are no winners in a tariff war, Kang said tariff wars harm public welfare and global prosperity, and true progress comes from active participation and healthy competition.

Given the current stagnation of the global economy, no single country can resolve the situation on its own. It is vital for all nations to work together to tackle challenges, and doing so requires a mid-to-long-term perspective, said Kwak of Rikkyo University.

China and the world must recognize that great unity is the only path out of the current crisis if the US is trying to implement a strategy of "divide and rule" with its "reciprocal tariffs", Kwak said.

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XI'S VISIT

China, Russia foster green partnership

Collaboration in oil, natural gas fields expanding

By ZHENG XIN
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Russia and China are forging a broader and greener energy partnership that far transcends the traditional fossil energy trade, taking in hydrogen and renewables, according to a think tank official.

This deepening partnership signals broadening cooperation between the two countries, encompassing many sectors, said Zhang Xiuling, director of the Overseas Investment Environment Department, which is part of China National Petroleum Corp's Beijing-based Economics and Technology Research Institute.

Russia was China's leading crude oil supplier for the second year in a row last year, driven by surging pipeline capacity, Zhang said.

"Over the past 30 years, collaboration has expanded from the trade in oil to natural gas, pipelines, upstream exploration and development, engineering construction and equipment exports," she added.

In a turbulent global energy market, China and Russia, working closely together, contribute to the global energy supply and equilibrium of demand, Zhang said.

"The market continues to be volatile, and competition in the energy field is intensifying, influenced by geopolitics, technological advances, responses to climate change and supply chain restructuring. With all of this, the rapid and stable development of China-Russia oil and gas collaboration is all the more important," she said.

The partnership not only bolsters energy security for both countries, but also contributes to the stability of global energy supply chains and the balance of global energy demand and supply within an open and diversified environment, Zhang said, adding that Russia's role in bolstering China's energy security cannot be underestimated.

The China-Russia east-route natural gas pipeline, with the largest single-line gas transmission capacity in China, is expected to play an



Technicians conduct routine inspections on a China-Russia east-route natural gas pipeline in Qinhuangdao, a city in North China's Hebei province, in September 2023. CAO JIANXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

ever greater role, she said. The pipeline, the third cross-border long-distance natural gas pipeline to supply China, following the China-Central Asia and China-Myanmar pipelines, was fully connected at the end of last year and is operating at full capacity, with an annual transmission volume of 38 billion cubic meters of gas, according to its operator, China Oil & Gas Pipeline Network Corp.

Wang Hongzhi, head of the National Energy Administration, said earlier that the government is committed to implementing with its Russian counterparts the important consensus on energy collaboration reached by the leaders of the two countries.

The General Administration of Customs said that while most of China's oil imports still come from the Middle East, the country imported 108 million metric tons of crude oil from Russia last year, equivalent to 2.17 million barrels per day and

accounting for about 20 percent of its total crude imports.

The 31 billion cubic meters of pipeline natural gas imported from Russia last year was complemented by 8.3 million tons of liquefied natural gas, making Russia one of China's key gas suppliers in 2024.

The geographical proximity of the two countries is a crucial advantage, because oil and gas pipelines connecting the two countries bypass other countries, reducing political and military risks associated with transit routes, Zhang said.

Long-term oil and gas trade contracts with Russia have been consistently honored, and pipeline supplies have remained stable and reliable, she said.

Zhang also said she envisions deeper alignment and expanded collaboration across the industry value chain.

Emerging sectors such as hydrogen and carbon capture, utilization and

storage, alongside carbon markets, present significant growth potential, aligning with both countries' goals of carbon neutrality, she said.

Russia aims to become a major global hydrogen supplier, using its natural gas resources for blue hydrogen and nuclear power for yellow hydrogen, Zhang said.

Blue hydrogen is made from natural gas, but the carbon dioxide released during production is captured and stored instead of being released into the atmosphere, making it cleaner than regular hydrogen made from natural gas. Yellow hydrogen is produced using electricity from nuclear power plants to split water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen, a low-carbon process because nuclear energy itself does not directly release greenhouse gases.

At the same time, China, with its advanced hydrogen technology and growing market demand, complements Russia's resource potential,

creating a foundation for comprehensive hydrogen industry collaboration, she said.

In carbon markets, Russia has potential as a major carbon credit seller, given its wealth of resources and nascent carbon trading market, Zhang said.

She also sees opportunities for collaboration in low-carbon technologies, carbon footprint monitoring, carbon capture, utilization and storage, and carbon market integration, given the rapid advances that China is making with solar and wind power, electric vehicles and carbon markets.

"With both countries aiming for carbon neutrality before 2060, there is a lot of room for us to work together on hydrogen and carbon capture, utilization and storage," Zhang said. "There is huge potential for a comprehensive partnership that extends beyond traditional fossil fuels into a new era of green energy collaboration."

Growth of agricultural cooperation to enhance food security

By ZHAO YIMENG
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Agricultural cooperation between China and Russia is expanding rapidly and may help reduce China's food imports from the United States, experts said.

Wen Tiejun, a rural issues scholar and a professor at Renmin University of China, said climate change is opening new possibilities for farming in Russia's Far East, which was once dominated by permafrost. As previously uncultivable land becomes cultivable, agricultural collaboration between the two countries is gaining strategic significance, he said.

"As large areas of Russia's Far East become arable and suitable for farming, China will no longer need to rely heavily on the US as a major agricultural exporter," Wen said. He added that concerns over food security will be further reduced.

China relies on imports to meet more than 85 percent of its soybean demand. The US was once its primary supplier, but China has restructured its import sources in recent years to mitigate supply chain risks, bringing in soybeans not only from Russia, but also from Brazil and Argentina, Wen noted.

According to "China Agricultural Outlook (2025-34)", a report recently released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, soybean imports reached a record 105.03 million metric tons last year, up 6.5 percent from the previous year. Brazil accounted for approximately 71 percent of total imports, while the US provided 21 percent and Argentina 4 percent.

Russia was the largest supplier of non-genetically modified soybeans to China, exporting 614,000 tons last year, the report said.

Wen noted that while Russia faced severe food shortages in the 1990s, its agricultural output and market supply have surged dramatically. With the expansion of Russia's northern agricultural zones, China has become the most viable destination for Russia's grain exports, as exporting to other markets would be less cost-effective.

Given China's large demand for agricultural trade, "this cooperation has no ceiling," Wen said.

He added that the China-Russia agricultural partnership now plays a strategic role, shifting from traditional commodity trade toward integrated cooperation across the entire agri-food system — from farming to food security planning.

The two countries pledged, in a joint statement issued in May last year, to tap the "huge potential" in agricultural cooperation, expand mutual market access and strengthen trade in key products including soybeans, pork, seafood, grains, edible oils, fruits and nuts.

The statement also called for deeper investment cooperation and continued research into establishing agricultural demonstration zones in Russia's Far East.

Last month, Chinese and Russian agricultural scientists convened at a seminar in South China's Hainan province to strengthen collaborative efforts in soybean research.

The seminar on soybean breeding technology, held in Sanya, Hainan, from April 14 to 19, brought together experts from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the All-Russian Scientific Research Institute of Soybean. Discussions focused on breeding techniques, germplasm resource development, technology transfer and industrial cooperation.

Han Tianfu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences' Institute of Crop Sciences, said that during the Sanya seminar, the delegation toured CAAS facilities, including an experimental station and a breeding accelerator platform, observing techniques such as soybean pollen cryopreservation and rapid field breeding trials.

Looking ahead, the two countries aim to deepen cooperation on the joint introduction and identification of soybean germplasm resources, build a high-oil and high-yield breeding system, and address core technologies in soybean breeding, while coordinating the research and application of cultivation techniques, Han added.

Hainan a magnet for Russian tourists

By XU NUO in Beijing
and CHEN BOWEN in Haikou

While busloads of Russians flock to the morning markets of Heihe, a city in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, a considerable number of Russian travelers are also hitting pristine beaches on the other side of the country, in South China's Hainan province, after taking long-haul flights.

Data from local authorities in Sanya, a resort city in the island province of Hainan, shows that 173,900 trips were made to the city by Russian tourists in 2024, representing an elevenfold increase compared with the previous year.

At Dadonghai Bay in Sanya, the beaches are filled with sunbathing Russians, and even the fruit vendors call out to potential customers in the Russian language.

"The warm climate, abundant sunshine and clear waters here, and its unique tropical climate and marine landscapes, are key reasons attracting Russian tourists," said Chen Xiaolei, a local tour guide who can speak Russian.

Apart from the exotic coastal scenery, key attractions for Russian travelers include Hainan's favorable visa-free policy and quick customs clearance.

The National Immigration Administration expanded authorized purposes of visa-free entry for individuals from 59 countries to Hainan starting on Feb 9, 2024.

In July, the administration implemented a visa-free policy, allowing foreign tour groups from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions to enter and stay for 144 hours in Hainan, and in



Russian tourists receive free coconuts distributed by the local government at a scenic area in Sanya, Hainan province, on May 1. WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

December, the transit visa-free stay for foreigners within Hainan was extended to up to 240 hours.

A visitor identified only as Konstantin, who flew directly from Krasnoyarsk in south-central Siberia to Sanya, said: "China's visa-free policy is incredibly practical and convenient for us. We plan to stay in Sanya for 10 days, which gives us plenty of time to enjoy our trip."

The Sherikovs, a Russian couple celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary in Sanya, said, "The customs clearance process took less than 10 minutes, which was much smoother than we expected."

The expanding international flight network, with more direct routes from Russian cities to Sanya, has also made the coastal city more accessible.

In the first quarter, nearly 500 flights operated between Russia and Sanya — a 400 percent increase from the same period last year, bringing in more than 5,000 Russian tourists every week, according to the Fenghuang entry-exit border checkpoint in Sanya.

Huang Xing, head of the Sanya tourism, culture, radio, television and sports bureau, said that to enhance the travel experience for

international tourists, local hotels and scenic spots have introduced multilingual signs in English, Russian and Chinese, facilitated international credit card payments and established foreign currency exchange points, along with regularly held concerts, cultural performances and sporting events.

While enjoying sunbathing, tropical fruit and the vibrant nightlife, more Russian tourists are beginning to dig deeper into Chinese culture for more unique travel experiences in Sanya, such as traditional Chinese medicine therapies, he said.

Huang Juhai, director of the specialty treatment department at the Sanya International Friendship Sanatorium of Traditional Chinese Medicine, said, "TCM is very popular among Russian tourists, as international visitors' acceptance of TCM has significantly increased."

Chen, the local tour guide, said that more than half of his Russian clients opt for TCM therapies.

"Many of them come to seek TCM treatments for cervical and lumbar pain, joint diseases, obesity and digestive system disorders," he said.

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PLA Honor Guard set for Red Square parade

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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The People's Liberation Army Honor Guard has prepared well to take part in the spectacular military parade that will mark the 80th anniversary celebrations of the victory of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War on Friday in Moscow, Russia, in a demonstration of China's commitment to maintaining world peace.

The 119 members of the PLA Honor Guard have already participated in three rehearsals — on April 29, Saturday and Wednesday — for the parade at Red Square in Moscow.

In a statement released on Monday, the Chinese Defense Ministry said the PLA Honor Guard was invited by the defense ministries of Russia and Belarus to participate in commemorative parades marking the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War in Moscow and Minsk.

Meanwhile, videos of the members of the Honor Guard participating in the rehearsals in Moscow have sparked widespread discussions on Chinese social media.

In the videos, the guards can be seen singing popular Chinese military songs while marching, as Chinese students and local residents warmly cheer them on.

"When I guarded the Chinese flag down the streets of Moscow and saw countless Chinese expatriates waving the national flag, I felt that the flag is a symbol of faith, direction and the dreams and hopes of countless Chinese people," Cui Hangteng, a member of the Honor Guard squad, was quoted by China Media Group as saying after a rehearsal.

"This warmth is our strength in this mission," he added.

In another widely circulated video, the Honor Guard soldiers can be seen chanting slogans, such as "Remember history, commemorate the martyrs" and "Justice will prevail. Peace will prevail. The people will prevail", as they march down the streets. Crowds of onlookers can be seen responding enthusiastically, shouting, "Long live China!"

Another popular video shows the Honor Guard members singing *Ode to the Motherland*, one of China's best known patriotic songs, accompanied by a Chinese woman in the crowd playing a bamboo flute.

Liu Chao, another member of the Honor Guard, told China Media Group that to further demonstrate the friendship between China and Russia, they also learned to sing classic Russian songs.

During the rehearsals in Red Square, they chanted "Long live China-Russia friendship. Long live world peace" in Russian.

Upon arriving in Moscow, the Honor Guard squad had to adjust to the time difference and change in weather. They trained rigorously to ensure a high-standard performance.

Another team member, Zhang Dingxin, said that they drew from previous experience of international appearances, actively overcoming the adverse effects of time and temperature differences, as well as changes in environment. They especially made plans to cope with possible adverse weather conditions and unexpected situations to ensure a spectacular parade appearance.

In 2015, members of the PLA Honor Guard participated in a military parade in Moscow commemorating the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War.

XI'S VISIT



Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM
China and the World Roundtable | China-Russia Relations

Editor's note: China and Russia made great contributions to the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War. In the face of global challenges, the two countries will promote the correct historical perspective on World War II, and promote an equal and orderly multipolar world. Experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Ekaterina Arapova

Sino-Russian cooperation beyond energy

Amid the current environment of global instability and escalating trade tensions among major economies, the strategic partnership between Russia and China has acquired added importance. Despite the mounting pressure of sanctions on Russia and growing protectionist pressure on China, Sino-Russian relations remain resilient and continue to develop steadily.

In fact, some big power's rising trade protectionism has become a catalyst for deepening economic cooperation between China and Russia, reinforcing their mutual interest in building a global trade and financial architecture that can withstand external shocks.

From a political standpoint, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership reflects the independent and sovereign course of the two major economies.

Having faced external economic shocks before other countries, Russia has had time to adapt its economy to the changing times, gaining temporary advantage at a time of intensifying global protectionist trends.

Sino-Russian cooperation is deepening in different fields including trade, investment, finance and legal coordination, and they are boosting their partnership and seizing the opportunities across different strategic domains.

Sino-Russian trade and economic ties have been growing at a rapid pace. In 2024, bilateral trade reached a record \$244.8 billion, surpassing the previous high of \$240.1 billion. The foundation for this trade relationship was laid by the exchange of energy resources, machinery and equipment, food products and high-tech goods. China continues to increase its exports to Russia, becoming a leading player in sectors such as cars, home appliances and consumer electronics.

Thanks to the withdrawal of Western brands from Russia, Russian and Chinese automakers together now make up 90 percent of the domestic car segment, with the competition among leading Chinese brands such as Geely, Haval, Chery and Changan helping improve the quality of cars and promoting technological innovation. In fact, in the Russian market, Chinese goods are more popular than South Korean, European, Japanese and US products.

The tourism sector, too, is showing signs of robust recovery. Thanks to the mutual easing of visa requirements and the resumption of visa-free group travel, the total number of tours between the two countries increased to 1.2 million in 2023. In 2024, the number of Chinese tourists



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traveling to Russia reached 848,000, accounting for half of the total number of tourists visiting Russia.

The growth of cultural exchanges and tourism amid geopolitical tensions has made tourism an important aspect of bilateral "soft power". That's why improving tourism infrastructure and the quality of services remains priorities for both governments.

Given the volatile global energy markets, a decline in oil prices due to the global slowdown could decrease Russian export revenues. But that could be partly offset by increasing Russian exports as trade flows shift away from the US. No wonder Russia has been emphasizing the importance of trade volumes and investments for deepening cooperation that

includes the relocation and localization of production, technology transfer, and the creation of high value-added industry chains.

In August 2024, Russia and China agreed to an updated Plan for Bilateral Investment Cooperation. As a result, Chinese foreign direct investment has been helping Russia diversify its trade and build long-term economic resilience. Also, increasing outbound Russian investment will further strengthen the Sino-Russian partnership and help mitigate the effects of Western sanctions.

The growing presence of major Russian and Chinese companies in each other's markets is facilitating cross-border transactions and intra-country settlements between companies' subsidiaries through local branches, and thus reducing the need for traceable global transfers.

The expansion of Sino-Russian trade and investment dialogue is complemented by the deepening of bilateral and multilateral financial cooperation.

The trade war hovering over the world, along with the evolving trends across the Global South, is stimulating the development of an alternative global financial architecture, marked by increased global interest in initia-

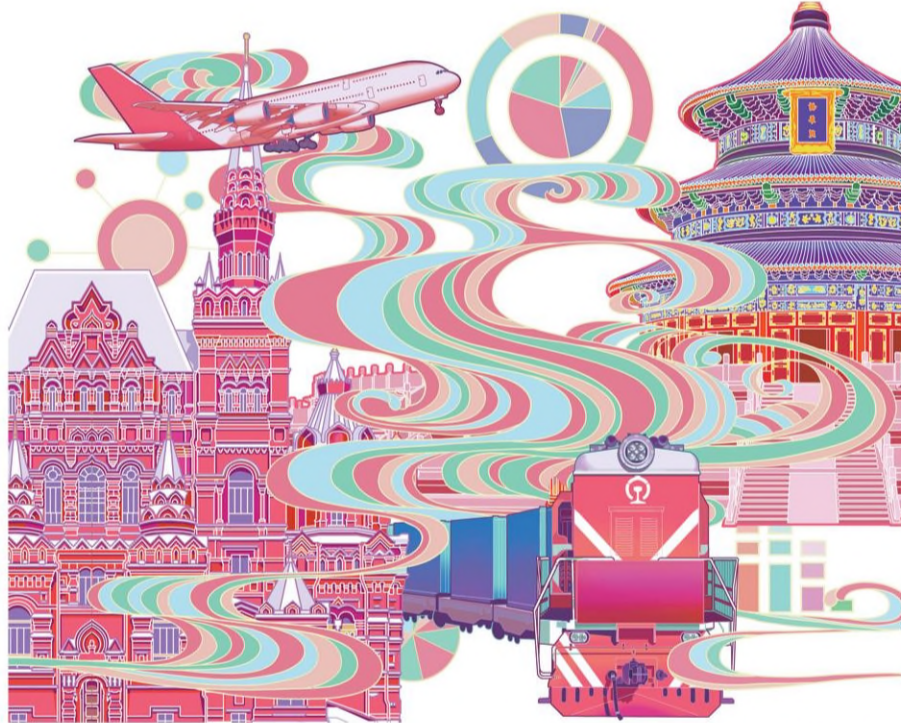
tives such as BRICS Pay, the integration of domestic payment systems, and the establishment of new forms of trade settlements.

And on multilateral cooperation platforms such as BRICS, there is a growing demand for institutionalizing mechanisms for joint legal defense against secondary sanctions, including the creation of arbitration bodies and global dispute-resolution systems.

Comprehensive support for banks and external economic players provide legal protection for their foreign operations, and the construction of a normative base for collective arbitration has become essential to boosting financial resilience. There is a growing demand to reform the World Trade Organization to counter trade wars, ensuring it operates impartially in resolving disputes and reducing dominance by any single economy.

In short, the strategic partnership between Russia and China continues to deepen in spite of the deteriorating geopolitical environment, with the trade war catalyzing the emergence of a multipolar model of global economic interaction — one in which Moscow and Beijing play leading roles.

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



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Nikita Lomagin and Igor Khodachek

History of anti-fascist war still inspiring today

Eight decades since the victorious events of 1945, the memory of World War II is fading with the passing of the heroes who fought the fascist forces. However, there has been no letup in the debates on the war's history. In fact, the debates are flaring up with renewed vigor, as the memory of World War II is being increasingly used as a tool of political pressure, and to shape alternative historical narratives and escalating confrontations.

Today, trade wars, sanction regimes and bloc rivalries, which remind us of World War II, are further alienating nations, eroding trust, and raising international tensions. These "historical wars" often involve former adversaries as well as former allies.

The experiences of World War II offer a different path, a path of solidarity, mutual assistance, and joint resistance against external aggression. An apt example of joint resistance is the cooperation between the Soviet Union and China during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

China and the Soviet Union joined the fight against fascism and militarism as early as August 1937, by signing a non-aggression pact. The Soviet Union provided military aid for Chi-



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na, and after the end of the European campaign, joined the Chinese people's resistance against the Japanese aggressors. Chinese soldiers fought heroically under extreme circumstances, tying down significant Japanese forces that also posed a threat to the Soviet Union in the Far East.

Despite China's internal challenges, the Chinese people's resistance was a key factor in the defeat of Japan in World War II. China suffered huge losses but did not capitulate, setting an example of national resilience. While Soviet assistance bolstered China's anti-fascist struggle, China prevented a substantial number of Japanese forces from advancing toward the Soviet Union's borders. The two sides' mutual support was a genuine partnership, free of colonial dominance or coercion, and remains one of the few examples of relations based on equality between major powers during a major war.

Respectful, pragmatic and strategic interaction and cooperation between the two major countries should be seen as a prototype for a new kind of major-country relations built on mutual respect, mutual benefit, and mutual recognition of each other's core interests.

The cooperation between the Soviet Union and China extended well beyond the military sphere. The two sides engaged in political exchanges, joint economic projects, and cultural diplomacy. Among other things, this gave rise to shared higher education initiatives that laid the groundwork for intergenerational understanding. A logical continuation of this partnership was the participation of the two sides in the anti-fascist alliance, which was followed by the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. Also, the Soviet Union and China became two of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which affirmed their status as victors

and institutionalized their influence in the new international security framework. And their military cooperation evolved into long-term political alignment, embedded in the architecture of the postwar world.

In the 21st century, as fierce debates on the interpretation of wartime history become part of global confrontations, the Soviet-Chinese cooperation during World War II offers a compelling alternative, because it united rather than divided countries. It demonstrated how the joint fight against fascism and militarism can serve as the foundation of long-term mutual trust — even between countries with different political systems and cultures. The legacy of such cooperation can act as an antidote to "memory wars," a tool for forging shared narratives, and a platform for cultural and humanitarian dialogue.

Continuing this dialogue is essential through joint research initiatives, intergovernmental academic commissions, co-produced documentaries and shared commemorative events. Such collaboration can transform our shared historical legacy into a resource for cooperation rather than conflict, leading to the restoration of lasting peace.

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

Liu Guangming

Main Eastern battlefield vital in WWII victory

The 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War this year has boosted Chinese people's pride for resisting the main forces of militarist Japan, playing a decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the fascist Japanese aggressors. The Asian battlefield played an equally important role as the European one in the war.

To determine the decisive factors that shaped the course and outcome of the war, we should not rely on superficial facts and, instead, consider the broader historical context. For years, some believed that China's victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression was not achieved by the Chinese people. Instead, the Chinese people "endured" the Japanese assault until the US and the Soviet Union joined the World Anti-Fascist War. This is a distortion of history.

The Sept 18 Incident in 1931, which marked the beginning of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, was a prologue to the World Anti-Fascist War. And the July 7 Incident, or the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, in 1937 signaled the start of China's full-scale war of resistance and the establishment of the main Eastern battlefield of the World Anti-Fascist War.

As part of the World Anti-Fascist War, the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression began first and lasted the longest. China, the main battlefield in Asia, played a decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the Japanese aggressors. Its decisive role, much like that of the Soviet Union in Europe and the US in the Pacific, is beyond doubt.

The exploits of the American, British and other Allied forces in the Asia-Pacific, the Soviet Red Army's operations in Northeast China, and the struggles of the peoples of Southeast Asia against Japanese aggression all played key roles in the defeat of Japanese fascism. But none of this diminishes China's central role in the victory in the war.

Data analysis can offer an objective view of the events and China's decisive role in the ultimate defeat of the Japanese aggressors.

First, in terms of army divisions, China contained the largest number of Japanese troops. From the July 7 Incident to the end of the war, the proportion of Japanese troops deployed in China each year peaked at more than 90 percent, with the lowest being about 35 percent, and it averaged over 70 percent through the eight years.

Also, China inflicted the heaviest losses on the Japanese forces. From the Sept 18 Incident to the end of the war, Chinese forces accounted for the deaths of more than 1.5 million Japanese soldiers — more than 70 percent of Japan's total military casualties in World War II. After Japan's surrender, more than 1.28 million Japanese soldiers capitulated in China, representing over 50 percent of Japan's forces that surrendered overseas. China also made the greatest sacrifices, with its civilian and military casualties exceeding 35 million.

Second, from the German invasion of the Soviet Union to the siege of Moscow, the German and Japanese forces attacked the Soviet Union from both the east and west. But Japan's "Northern Advance" plan depended on conquering China first to secure its rear for the "Greater East Asia War". With the bulk of its army bogged down in China, Japan had no choice but to abandon the plan.

By early December 1941, 35 of Japan's 51 army divisions were tied up in China, accounting for 69 percent of its total ground forces.

Third, Adolf Hitler repeatedly urged Japan to move south to strategically coordinate with Nazi Germany. But since the war in China had reached a stalemate, Japan couldn't divert its forces. When the Pacific war broke out in 1941, about 70 percent of Japan's army (about 35 divisions) was deployed in China — and the majority of them remained there till the end of the war.

Japanese historians have acknowledged that even after the war with the United States and the United Kingdom began, the Japanese army's main battlefield remained the Chinese mainland. So it is unjust to claim US and British offensives in the Pacific played the main role in the defeat of Japan while ignoring China's role in resisting Japan's expansion in the south.

For a long time, influenced by Western views, some Western historians have often displayed arrogance and bias, highlighting the role of the US and the UK while trying to belittle China's contributions and sacrifices in the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War.

It is necessary to objectively assess the roles of the major fronts in the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War. On the European front, the Soviet Union bore the brunt of Nazi Germany's military might, with the Eastern battlefield serving as the main battlefield. The Battle of Moscow in 1941 shattered the myth of Nazi Germany's invincibility, and the Battle of Stalingrad marked the turning point in World War II.

In the Pacific, the US used its industrial might to supply advanced weapons and materials, significantly bolstering the Allied forces. The Battle of Midway in 1942 stripped Japan of its strategic advantage, while the Guadalcanal Campaign marked the start of the Allied counteroffensive.

Similarly, China's role as the main Eastern battlefield is undeniable. The 1927 "Tanaka Memorial" revealed Japan's ambition to conquer China, dominate Asia and rule over the world. China's protracted resistance thwarted these plans of Japan and disrupted the Axis powers' strategy of conquering the world. To fully understand the roles of different countries in the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War, the world needs to acknowledge the importance of mutual support among the Allied fronts, including China, whose indelible contributions are etched in the victory monument of the World Anti-Fascist War.

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



The author is a professor at National Defense University of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

CHINA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

Deep-sea vault built to capture CO2

Carbon storage project beneath South China Sea set to secure millions of tons of greenhouse gas

By SHADOW LI
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Editor's note: In this series, *Greener Visions*, China Daily delves into the research, development and implementation of cutting-edge carbon technologies in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, aiming to cut emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.

In a breakthrough to keep carbon dioxide permanently locked away, China has built a secure "prison" for the greenhouse gas deep beneath the South China Sea.

Located about 200 kilometers southwest of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, the Enping 15-1 oil platform hosts the nation's first megaton-sized offshore Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS) project. The platform, Asia's largest offshore oilfield, is operated by China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

The facility is designed to capture, secure and store 1.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually — equivalent to planting 14 million trees or taking 1 million cars off the road for 30 years. Since its launch in June 2023, it has already injected and stored 180,000 tons of carbon dioxide beneath the seabed, marking a major step in China's fight against climate change.

The Enping 15-1 oil reservoir was selected for China's offshore CCUS demonstration project due to its unusually high CO2 content — a trait that once made extraction unviable. Traditionally, tapping such reserves would release carbon dioxide in the reservoir into the atmosphere, risking corrosion of platforms and pipelines while polluting the environment.

Recent advances in CCUS technology, however, have turned this challenge into an opportunity. The project now uses "CO2 flooding", a circular process where the capture system traps the carbon dioxide that emerges from extraction, and injects it for further oil extraction and permanent sequestration.

The method is a well-established CCUS technique used in oil drilling to enhance oil recovery. In this process, CO2 captured from industrial activities is transported via tanker trucks or pipelines and injected into oil reservoirs. The gas increases pressure, displacing scattered crude oil and boosting extraction rates, explained Xie Mingying, chief reservoir engineer at the Nanhai East Petroleum Research Institute at CNOOC's Shenzhen branch.

The Enping 15-1 oil platform announced it would begin CO2 flooding in May. Previously, captured CO2 had only been stored in a geological "dome" — a seabed structure 800 meters deep and located 3 kilometers from the platform.

Traditional oil recovery methods typically extract just 18 to 20 percent of a reservoir's crude oil.

However, CO2 flooding can increase recovery rates by 7 to 15 percent and extend the reservoir's life span by 15 to 20 years, according to Tang Yong, a professor at Southwest Petroleum University's Petroleum Engineering School.

While onshore CCUS projects have a longer operational history due to land-based logistic advantages, offshore CCUS initiatives remain relatively new, said Xie from the research institute.

One stone, two birds

The use of CO2 flooding will foster a win-win scenario by reducing emissions while enhancing oil production, said Mei Chuang, offshore installation manager of the Enping 15-1 platform. This marks a major leap from CO2 storage alone, to its active utilization.

Over the next 10 years, the project will inject over 1 million tons of CO2 into the Enping 15-1 oilfield, increasing crude oil production by 200,000 tons.

Li Wei, an offshore installation manager at the oil platform, said the associated gas in Enping's reservoir contains an exceptionally high CO2 concentration of about 95 percent.



The Enping 15-1 oil platform in the South China Sea hosts the nation's first megaton-sized offshore Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage project. PHOTOS BY DENG YONGAN / CHINA DAILY



Left: Li Wei, an offshore installation manager of the oil platform, inspects operations. Right: Xie Mingying (left) and Sun Xiaona, reservoir engineers of the Nanhai East Petroleum Research Institute, explain to visitors how the CCUS project works.



Li is one of approximately 90 maintenance personnel working on the platform.

This gas undergoes a rigorous treatment process: separation and consolidation followed by dehydration and filtration through a pressurization system, before being injected into a dome structure within the deep saline aquifer.

While some sequestered CO2 may resurface during oil recovery, it's recaptured and reused, creating a closed-loop system that boosts production while slashing emissions.

Li said that other gases from the reservoir are utilized for on-site power generation, enabling the platform to achieve full energy self-sufficiency. "This approach not only ensures operational independence but also significantly reduces our emissions," he said.

Homegrown technologies

The Enping 15-1 CCUS project features seven key technologies developed domestically that enable China to independently execute such offshore operations.

Sun Xiaona, senior reservoir engineer at the Nanhai East Petroleum Research Institute of CNOOC's Shenzhen branch, said the project provides a critical technological foundation for future large-scale offshore CCUS initiatives.

These breakthroughs are pivotal for CNOOC's larger endeavor — a 10-megaton CCUS project in Daya Bay, Huizhou, Guangdong. This ambitious project is being developed in collaboration with Guangdong authorities, ExxonMobil, and Shell.

The partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2022, outlining plans to construct China's first offshore CCUS cluster, with an eventual annual sequestration capacity of 10 million tons.

The first phase of the project is designed to handle a capacity to capture up to 1 million tons of CO2 a year. The second project phase will see the capacity increased to 2 million tons annually.

The project is located in the Daya Bay Petrochemical Industrial Zone — China's top petrochemical hub for the past five years. The zone has a high concentration of refineries and chemical plants with high carbon dioxide emissions and strong decarbonization demands, making it an ideal choice for this CCUS hub.

Under the plan, industrial CO2 will be captured onshore, transported offshore, and permanently stored beneath the seabed.

China National Offshore Oil Corporation will transport and sequester captured CO2 offshore, likely in the eastern South China Sea, Xie said.

"As a State-owned enterprise, CNOOC must help the Greater Bay Area address climate change while pursuing sustainable development," she said.

However, she acknowledged there are significant challenges for the project to overcome. Offshore sequestration, while safer than land storage, requires massive investment due to the South China Sea's 100-meter average depth. Deeper waters further increase technical and financial hurdles.

"CO2 storage itself isn't profitable," Xie noted. "The economic incentive comes from finding productive uses for captured carbon."

Going big

In its quest for net-zero emissions, China is betting big on the nascent technology.

As of November 2022, the number of CCUS demonstration projects in China in operation, under construction or being planned, was more than 100, according to CCUS Progress in China — a status report released in 2023 by the Global CCS Institute, Tsinghua University, and the Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21.

Nearly half the projects are operational, the report said, with an annual CO2 capture capacity exceeding 4 megatons and injection surpassing 2 megatons — marking increases of roughly 33 percent and 65 per-

cent respectively, since 2021.

In April 2024, China unveiled its first batch of green, low-carbon technology demonstration projects eligible for government grants. Of 47 selected projects, six were CCUS technology related.

As the number of projects grows, they have spread across diverse industries, spanning traditional sectors like oil and gas, chemicals and electricity, to industries including cement, and iron and steel. These are generally considered sectors where it is hard to cut emissions.

In June 2023, the Taizhou Power Plant in Jiangsu province commissioned Asia's largest coal-power CCUS facility, with an annual capacity of 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide — a milestone for the region's energy transition.

Beyond enhanced oil recovery, China is exploring innovative CO2 applications, including microalgae cultivation and high-value product manufacturing.

In December 2022, Zhejiang University and Guangdong Energy Group jointly established the first demonstration project using flue gas for microalgae cultivation and CO2 sequestration at Guangdong Yudean Zhanjiang Biomass Power Generation Co.

In 2024, the Global CCS Institute's Global Status report for the first time devoted a separate section to the development of CCUS in China, as the technology gained wider international traction.

Growing acceptance

As of July 2024, the number of global carbon capture and storage projects in development had surged to 628, marking a 60 percent year-on-year jump, the CCS 2024 report showed.

Another 50 CCS facilities were in operation, with 44 under construction.

The International Energy Agency reports

a surge in CCUS development, with 38.4 megatons a year capacity under construction, and 346.8 megatons in planned projects to be achieved by 2030.

By 2030, this growth could help CCUS deliver 8 percent of emissions reductions needed to meet net-zero goals, according to the IEA's 2023 analysis. The agency emphasizes the current decade is critical for scaling investments to meet climate targets.

Recognizing CCUS' decarbonization potential, many countries are taking action to incorporate it in their push to carbon neutrality.

The United Kingdom and Japan have implemented policies to accelerate CCUS deployment, while also developing related regulatory frameworks and technical standards.

In Asia, countries constrained by land such as Singapore, South Korea, and Japan, are making cross-border agreements to export CO2 for storage in nations with abundant geological capacity, including Australia, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Xie emphasized the need for expanded policy support to drive adoption of CCUS. Citing Singapore's carbon tax as an effective model, she said such measures create financial incentives for emission reductions.

Direct subsidies for CCUS projects, enterprise carbon allowances, and the expansion of carbon trading mechanisms to further stimulate private sector engagement could be introduced, she said.

Sun, from the Panyu Development Office, said: "When key conditions align — including suitable large-scale storage sites, higher carbon credit prices, and robust policy support — the CCUS industry will reach its tipping point."

China's maritime territories have immense CO2 storage capacity, with a total of 2.58 trillion tons of offshore storage potential. The Pearl River Delta is able to store 300 billion tons, according to a report released in January 2023 by the China Geological Survey at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"The Greater Bay Area presents a unique opportunity," Sun said. "Its vibrant industries demand emission solutions that align perfectly with these massive undersea storage resources."

However, she highlighted key challenges for the Daya Bay CCUS project.

The primary challenge involves identifying and consolidating dispersed onshore carbon sources. A second major difficulty lies in ensuring the safe, efficient transportation of these substantial volumes of gas to precise undersea storage locations. Perhaps most critically, the storage duration presents unique challenges — requiring containment security for potentially thousands of years.

Sun emphasized that unlike typical industrial projects spanning decades, CCUS demands consideration of long-term consequences, including assessing whether stored gases might eventually re-enter marine ecosystems centuries later.



Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

CHINA

By YUE WENWAN, WANG HENGZHI and HU YITIAN
Xinhua

WUHAN — With over 20 marathon events taking place across the country, March 23 was dubbed “Super Marathon Day” in China.

Leading the pack was Wuhan Marathon in Hubei province, which expanded its participant limit to 40,000 this year. Demand was high, with over 450,000 people applying for a spot in the race.

For seasoned runner Yang Jun, from Beijing, a spot in the Wuhan Marathon was a long-awaited opportunity. “I had applied five times before and finally got in through the supplementary draw this year,” he said.

“It’s not only a fitness journey, but also a way to explore new cities,” said Yang, who has run tens of marathons in the past decade.

His enthusiasm is part of a broader trend. According to the Chinese Athletics Association, the number of road races nationwide grew to 749 last year, up from 699 in 2023, attracting more than 7 million runners, an increase of 1 million compared to last year.

The growing fever for road running has also reshaped many aspects of broader society.

Healthier lives

In a light drizzle and 18 C temperature, Ethiopian runners Asefa Mengstu Negevo and Guteni Shone Imana set new records in the men’s and women’s events in Wuhan in March. Meanwhile, Chinese marathon star He Jie broke the national record for the Wuhan Marathon, finishing in 2 hours, 10 minutes and 29 seconds.

“I wasn’t in my best condition after my recent Tokyo Marathon, but the rainy and cooling weather allowed me to enjoy the race,” he said. With the Wuhan Marathon now an official World Athletics Gold Label event, He embraced the chance to compete alongside top international runners.

Chinese runners’ performances have seen improvements on the international stage. According to the China Road Running Work Report published by the Chinese Athletics Association, over 18,000 runners completed marathons within three hours at certified races last year, and the national average marathon finish time improved by more than 5 minutes to 4 hours, 7 minutes and 1 second.

While elite runners chase records, many amateur participants prioritize health and the experience over personal bests.

Chen Weifen from Shandong province finished the race in 2 hours, 35 minutes and 50 seconds as the fifth fastest Chinese woman. “This was not my best performance, but I felt no regret. My main goal is to enjoy the race atmosphere in different cities.”

Similarly, Yang has seen transformative benefits from running. “I used to weigh more than 90 kilograms due to a sedentary lifestyle. Running marathons helped me shed 20 kg, and now, I wake up at five am every day for an hour-long run before work,” he said.

Beyond weight loss, running has given him improved focus and energy. “I don’t run for bragging anymore. I run for the joy of it.”

Accelerating industry

As fitness culture gains popularity, more Chinese runners are willing to invest in sports-related industries.

“The toughest part isn’t running the



Runners pass a flower-lined avenue during the Wuxi Marathon in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on March 23. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Marathon madness sweeps across nation

Road races promote healthy lifestyles, create economic benefits



Clockwise from left: A train passes as marathon participants run on the Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge in Wuhan, Hubei province, on March 23.

LI HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY Runners brave the scorching sun during the Wuxi Marathon in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on March 23. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY Participants in the Wuhan Marathon line up for their race packs on March 21. LIU ZHONGCAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



race — it’s getting selected,” said Dai Dongsheng, a runner from Chengdu, Sichuan province. “Once you’re in, spending on entry fees, gear and travel is just part of the experience.”

Marathons have driven significant economic activity, particularly in sportswear, wearable tech, as well as nutrition and recovery products.

“To prepare for the Wuhan Marathon, I spent 299 yuan (\$41) on a running shirt, 399 yuan on shorts, 600 yuan on earbuds and around 1,000 yuan on shoes,” said Luo Fuyuan from the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, whose investment paid off with a personal best of 2 hours, 30 minutes and 58 seconds.

According to the 2023 China Road Race Report, 90 percent of runners purchase sports protection gear, with 30 percent spending over 2,000 yuan annually. Meanwhile, 59 percent of runners invest over 1,000 yuan in wearable tech, and over 10 percent spend more than 5,000 yuan.

The tourism industry also benefits from marathon-driven spending. The Wuhan Marathon organizers reported that some 71,000 tourists visited Wuhan due to the race. Visiting runners generated 1.17 billion yuan in direct spending, and the total economic impact reached 2.98 billion yuan, up 40.2 percent from the previous year.

“The marathon boom and consumption fever for sports gear are the natural result of the rising incomes of Chinese people and their increasing focus on fitness,” said Jing Yan, a professor at Wuhan Sports University.

Embracing branding

A broad consensus has been reached in China that a marathon is a good way to promote cities. The Wuhan Marathon coincides with cherry blossom season, and organizers enhanced the course with flower displays and scenic spots.

“The cherry blossom-lined roads were stunning,” said Li Zhengyue from Fujian province. “The scenery, together with the cheers from spectators, kept me going, and the experience left me with a great impression of the city.”

For many runners, marathons also mean travel opportunities. “I’ve always wanted to see Wuhan’s cherry blossoms. Since the event offers discounts on accommodation and sightseeing, I brought my family along. We’ll stay two more days after the race to enjoy the city,” said Chen.

Chinese cities have embraced this concept by designing marathon routes with their landmarks. For example, the Beijing Marathon starts at Tian’anmen Square and passes the National Centre for the Performing Arts and Olympic venues. Meanwhile, Chongqing’s race includes the Yangtze River Cableway and the Hongya Cave.

According to a report released by the General Administration of Sport of China, a single large-scale marathon, such as the 2023 Shanghai Marathon, can generate economic benefits of 6 to 7 billion yuan. Even mid-sized marathons contribute significantly — like the 2023 Zhengzhou Marathon, which boosted the local cultural, sports and tourism industries by 1.46 billion yuan.

“Cities should tailor marathon events to their own strengths rather than creating similar experiences; it would be better if smaller cities can develop a sustainable and unique race culture,” Chen said.

Pace ‘bunnies’ hop to it to give runners extra bounce

By XUNUO
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As marathons gain popularity in leaps and bounds across China, a special group of runners, known as “bunnies” or “pacers,” are becoming popular among participants. Unlike regular runners, these pacers stand out with their distinct uniforms, bunny ear headbands and a flag or balloon on their backs displaying target finish times.

These “running metronomes” serve as a marathon’s rhythm keepers, helping participants maintain a desired pace throughout the 42.195-kilometer course and increase their chances of completing successfully.

There are different groups of pacers in a marathon, with varying target finish times. For example, runners who follow the “4:30 pacer group” would expect to complete the race in approximately 4 hours and 30 minutes.

“Organizers of marathon events typically select experienced athletes as pacers. They must have completed at least three marathons before and have a finish time at least 15 minutes faster than the pace they

are guiding,” Pan Quan, who has been selected twice as “sweeper rabbit” for those aiming to finish within the official cutoff time for two marathons, told China Daily.

“Pacers are typically seasoned marathon runners, with personal bests much faster than the group target time. Therefore, the most challenging part of being a pacer is slowing down,” Wang Chaoyang, a national senior marathon coach at Shanghai University of Sport, was quoted as saying by Xinmin Evening News.

“Maintaining a slower pace to guide others requires exceptional speed control skills,” Wang said.

A head coach of pacers for marathons, Wang requires his trainees to keep a close eye on their watch and speed markers along the way to ensure that their pace doesn’t vary by more than 3 seconds per km and that the total time deviation for the entire race is kept within 5 seconds.

Apart from excellent pacing skills and the ability to adjust on the fly, pacers also need to motivate participants, using verbal and nonverbal cues to boost their morale and resilience, Pan said.

The price of being a pacer is that

they are not able to break their personal bests, but competition for these roles remains fierce, with the possibility of being selected running at about 5 percent. “While achieving a personal best is important, being able to encourage and assist other runners along the course, and seeing them push through and achieve their goals because of my support, is incredibly rewarding,” Pan said.

As the popularity of marathons increases, the demand for “private bunnies,” or self-hired pacers, is on the rise. The private bunnies, who can also be friends, coaches, or fellow runners, offer personalized pacing tailored to a runner’s physical condition and individual needs.

Cui Ruofei, a seasoned marathon runner with five years’ experience in private pacing, told media outlet Phoenix Weekly that private bunnies provide targeted assistance by assessing a runner’s physical condition and training performance before a race.

During the race, they accompany and encourage their “boss,” manage pacing, deliver supplies and even record videos.

They often run one to two strides ahead to shield their runner from

the wind. At turns, they guide runners along the shortest path.

The fee for hiring a private pacer varies depending on the time goal set by the client, ranging from 2,000 (about \$275) to 6,000 yuan.

“It’s normal for private pacers to charge for their services, as long as it complies with relevant regulations and laws,” Cui said.

With the development of marathon culture and the increase in professional runners, private bunnies are likely to become more commonplace, the 34-year-old pacer added.

However, a clear boundary should be drawn as to how much a private rabbit can assist. Cui cited an incident where a top runner in the Nanjing Marathon was disqualified after being caught receiving a push from a private rabbit in the final stages.

Similarly, there was controversy after the 2024 Beijing Half Marathon after Chinese runner He Jie won the race thanks to three of his pace runners letting him cross the line first.

“The runner must complete the race independently,” Cui said. “Physical assistance shouldn’t be part of the race, and for safety reasons, it’s not advisable too — if a runner needs to be



Pan Quan (second from left) serves as a pacer during the Meishan Renshou Half Marathon in Meishan, Sichuan province, on Feb 23. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

pushed, they’re likely exhausted, and pushing could cause safety problems.”

In addition, some runners have reported encountering “rogue bunnies” who lack professionalism and responsibility. A marathon runner from Beijing shared on social media platform Xiaohongshu his recent experience at the Jujiang Marathon in Jiangxi province, where he failed to obtain his target finish time as the pacer he followed ran four minutes faster than the intended speed, throwing off his entire race strategy.

“This is a serious issue,” he wrote. “Runners aiming to finish within 3 hours and 30 minutes rely on 330 pacers for a steady pace to ensure consistent performance. If their pace is too fast in the first half, even slowing down later won’t help; the runner is likely to crash mid-race.”

Zhao Fuming, president of the Beijing Marathon Association, told Cover News that the quality of official pacers is crucial to the marathon event’s brand image and participants’ experience. Investing in and developing a strong pacer team is essential for enhancing the quality of marathons.

GLOBAL LENS

Beijing urges Manila to stop provocations

By ZHOU JIN
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Beijing urged Manila on Thursday to immediately stop infringements and provocations, and avoid challenging China's firm resolve to safeguard territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the remarks after a Philippine military vessel attempted to intrude into China's territorial waters near the Huangyan Island in the South China Sea on Monday.

The Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army said it deployed naval and air forces to track and monitor the vessel and warn it off in accordance with the law and regulations.

At a regular news briefing, Lin also blasted the Philippine military's statement calling the incident "threatening and provocative", saying the remarks disregarded the facts.

Lin stressed that Manila's frequent infringement of rights and provocations at sea are the root cause of tensions.

Huangyan Island is China's inherent territory, Lin said, adding that the necessary moves taken by China are "justified, lawful, professional and restrained".

Also on Thursday, Lin expressed firm opposition to a joint maritime and aerial patrol in the South China Sea by the Philippines, the United States and Australia, which said the patrol was aimed at strengthening joint operational capabilities and supporting a "free and open Indo-Pacific".

He urged the countries to stop forming groups and stirring up trouble in the South China Sea, and stop harming regional peace and stability.

Forming small circles in the South China Sea to pursue confrontation in the name of cooperation, to flex muscles in the name of freedom and to create chaos in the name of order represents the biggest source of risk for peace and stability in the region, he said.

The situation in the South China Sea is generally stable, and there is no problem with freedom of navigation and overflight that countries enjoy in accordance with the law, he said. Activities carried out in the region should refrain from targeting any third country, Lin added.

The Philippines has repeatedly caused provocation and created trouble at sea, and has collaborated with external forces to muddy the waters, flex military muscle and act as their pawn, Lin said, adding that such acts will only backfire.

China is committed to safeguarding territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and working with regional countries to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea, he said.

Combating mosquitoes



A worker sprays anti-mosquito insecticide to prevent the spread of dengue fever in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Tuesday.

HABIBUR RAHMAN / XINHUA

S. Korea forex reserves plummet to 5-year low

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
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South Korea's foreign exchange reserves dropped to a five-year low in April, figures showed, as authorities announced that they will implement 24-hour monitoring of financial and foreign exchange markets to guard against excess volatility.

The country's foreign exchange reserves reached \$404.67 billion at the end of April, down nearly \$5 billion from the \$409.66 billion of the previous month, according to figures released by the Bank of Korea, or BOK, on Thursday. It marked the lowest level for the foreign exchange reserves since April 2020.

The central bank attributed the sharp reduction to foreign exchange swap transactions with the National Pension Service, or NPS, the country's public pension fund manager.

In December, in an effort to stabilize the market during heightened volatility, the NPS was allowed to borrow up to \$65 billion, up from the previous cap of \$50 billion, from the BOK's foreign exchange reserves for overseas investment under a deal that lasts until the end of this year.

"During swap periods, foreign exchange reserves decrease by the transaction amount but the decrease is only temporary since the funds will be restored upon maturity," the BOK said in a news release.

A decrease in foreign currency deposits at financial institutions was another reason behind the drop, the BOK said, adding that South Korea's foreign reserve holdings ranked the 10th largest in the world at the end of March.

Amid global geopolitical tensions and trade uncertainties, South Korea is facing various challenges in its economy.

In early April, the South Korean won, which has been weakening following a martial law imposition fiasco of former president Yoon Suk-yeol, plummeted to its weakest level against the US dollar in 16 years.

At a meeting on macroeconomic and financial affairs on Thursday, Kim Beom-seok, acting minister of economy and finance, said the ministry will closely monitor the financial and foreign exchange market and make every effort to stabilize the economy, according to Yonhap News Agency.

The meeting was held a day after the United States Federal Reserve announced it will keep its key interest rates unchanged in the 4.25-4.5 percent range.

"Though the stock and bond markets have been generally stable recently, external uncertainties remain due to concerns over US economic slowdown and tariff negotiations," participants were quoted as saying.

Kim said the meeting will be held every week to swiftly respond to market changes.

In a separate meeting, Kim said the government will execute 70 percent of a recently passed extra budget, or 12 trillion won (\$8.58 billion), by the end of July to boost domestic demand and support export companies.

"Our economy is facing greater uncertainty than ever," Kim said.

Earlier this week, BOK Governor Rhee Chang-yong said volatility in the foreign exchange market is expected to continue in the near term due to global economic uncertainties and domestic political instability.



Dazzling zoo debut

People watch golden monkeys at the ZooParc de Beauval in Saint-Aignan, France, on Wednesday. Three golden monkeys from China made their public debut at the zoo, on the species' first journey outside Asia. Their arrival is part of a 10-year partnership between the zoo and the China Wildlife Conservation Association aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in wildlife protection and conservation.

GUILAUME SOUVANT / AFP

Australia-China travel rides high

As tourism thrives again, industry takes fresh look at ways to attract customers

By XIN XIN and ALEXIS HOOL in Sydney

Australia-China tourism is riding high on post-pandemic growth, with surging traveler numbers giving a strong fillip to the pillar sector.

Phillipa Harrison, managing director of Tourism Australia, the government agency responsible for attracting international visitors to the country for leisure and business events, told China Daily recently that the Chinese market is a major bright spot for the industry.

"We are pleased to see Chinese travelers returning to Australia in growing numbers. Over the past 12 months we have welcomed more than 935,000 Chinese travelers to Australia, and we look forward to welcoming many more this year," she said, adding that there was a "significant influx of travelers from China to Australia" during the Chinese New Year holiday earlier this year.

"The major drawcards for Chinese travelers have always been Australia's wide-open spaces, our unique wildlife and the chance to see the best beaches in the world, and that remains the case today," she said.

"We are also seeing a trend that many Chinese travelers would love to have authentic local experience, to interact with the friendly locals, which Australia is very strong at."

Paris Miller, national coordinator at the Australian Tourism Export

Council, an industry body representing Australia's tourism export sector, told China Daily that "the China market is very important to be established and continued", with firm Australia-China ties helping to spur exchanges, and many opportunities on both sides.

These include workshops and trade missions "to establish main partnerships and gain the confidence and resilience for the China market for products and services", Miller said.

Australia's international tourism continues to recover following the global disruption of the pandemic, with annual international visitor spending forecast to exceed pre-pandemic levels, before increasing to A\$50.7 billion (\$32.6 billion) by 2028, said Tourism Research Australia, part of the Australian Trade and Investment Commission.

International visitation to Australia totaled 7.6 million trips last year, Tourism Research Australia said.

Chinese travelers in the same period, with 829,000 trips, or 62 percent of December 2019 levels, made up Australia's second-highest international visitor market after New Zealand travelers' 1.3 million trips.

Harrison of Tourism Australia said the challenge of aviation capacity experienced by the sector in recent years on both sides had taken time to rebuild, but there is now "excellent capacity between China and Australia."

There are now 171 flights a week between 14 Chinese cities and Australia, she said, with Chinese airline partners who "graciously add even greater capacity" during peak times such as the Chinese New Year holiday.

"Cooperation between our sectors is important, which is why we work closely with our partners in China," she said. That includes strong and long-lasting partnerships with Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines and other airlines, Harrison said.

Visa policy

Last year China extended its visa-free policy for Australian passport holders' stay from 15 days to 30 days, which has further fueled demand.

Liu Dong, director of the China National Tourist Office in Sydney, told China Daily that the visa-related moves have a significant effect on promoting inbound tourism for China from Australia.

"The number of people traveling to China for business and visiting relatives has also increased significantly," he said.

Australian travelers' familiarity with China's tourism resources, products and routes can be raised to build on the improved air links and other services, he said.

"We must establish close ties with local travel agents and encourage them to develop products suitable for Australians to travel. We must also implement incentives for travel agents to stimulate their motivation to travel to China."

Personalized, experiential and immersive tourism is gradually becoming the mainstream with a travel mode that pays more attention to in-depth experiences that resonate closely with tourists, Liu said.

Amid those priorities, he said, more is being done to promote China's ice and snow tourism offerings, with Australian travel agents visiting Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces in Northeast China and their Chinese counterparts taking part in related industry events, he said.

Australian travel agents such as Yuri Cherniavsky are already tapping the latest industry trends and opportunities.

Cherniavsky, 66, runs a local travel agency and takes small groups of friends and tourists to China. His next trip will be to Harbin, Heilongjiang province, with a group of eight people.

Dion Woo, vice-president of the Asian Australian Business Council, a nonprofit group promoting business community networks, said at a recent industry event for travel to Sanya, Hainan province, that its attractions such as beaches, golf courses, local cuisine and increasingly convenient air links are poised to become a big draw for Australians.

"For me, Sanya is more than just a beautiful destination," Woo said. "It's a place of connection ... to a culture that is both different and familiar at the same time."

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Kenya court fines 4 for trafficking ants

NAIROBI — A Kenyan court on Wednesday fined four men \$7,700 each for trying to traffic thousands of ants valuable to the country's ecosystem, in cases experts say signal a shift in biopiracy from trophies like elephant ivory to lesser-known species.

Authorities arrested two Belgian teenagers, a Vietnamese man and a Kenyan national on April 5, accusing them in two separate cases of trying to smuggle out about 5,440 giant African harvester queen ants.

Magistrate Njeri Thuku said the ants would fetch in excess of \$900,000 online in Europe, Asia and parts of North America, where ant keepers maintain colonies in large transparent vessels known as formicariums to observe their cooperative behavior.

Queen ants are valued because they are the only ones capable of laying eggs that grow into worker, soldier and future queen ants, meaning that the illegal trade can jeopardize colonies critical to Kenya's wildlife ecosystem.

Thuku convicted the traffickers of dealing in live wildlife species, and ordered them to pay the fine or face 12 months in jail. They had all pleaded guilty.

The cases had raised questions about whether the alleged trafficking was linked to wider networks.

Thuku said Duh Heng Nguyen, from Vietnam, was sent to Nairobi to meet a Kenyan, Dennis Nganga, and collect ants in an elaborate scheme that had "all the hallmarks of illegal wildlife trade and possibly biopiracy."



Kenyan officials display live queen ants that were destined for Europe and Asia, at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport Law Courts in Nairobi on Tuesday. BRIAN INGANGA / AP

The two Belgians, identified in court documents as Lornoy David and Seppe Lodewijckx, are both ant enthusiasts who claimed in court that they acted out of naivety, Thuku said.

Lornoy David's phone revealed he was a member of a group known as "Ant Gang", and that he had initially bought 2,500 queen ants for \$200, Thuku said in her ruling.

"This is beyond a hobby," Thuku said. "Ants are prized by enthusiasts for the way they work together, performing tasks like building a nest, collecting seeds or making collective decisions without a leader, in what experts describe as a superorganism."

The Kenya Wildlife Service said

the *Messor cephalotes* ants are a critical species in maintaining soil health and ecosystem balance, and were intercepted by authorities at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in the capital Nairobi.

It said in a statement that the ants "were destined for the European and Asian exotic pet trade, where colonies of rare and ecologically unique species can command prices of up to 1,200 euros (\$1,357) each."

"Today's ruling sends a unequivocal message: Kenya will not tolerate the plunder of its biodiversity. Whether it's an ant or an elephant, we will pursue traffickers relentlessly," said Erustus Kanga, director general of Kenya Wildlife Service.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

UNITED STATES Trump announces trade deal with UK

US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday announced a "breakthrough deal" on trade. Trump said the deal increases access for US agricultural products, though he added that the final details were still being written up. UK officials said the deal will cut tariffs on UK cars from 27.5 percent to 10 percent and eliminate tariffs on steel and aluminum. Starmer said the tariff cuts set out in the new deal would come into place as soon as possible. The agreement marked the first since Trump triggered a global trade war with a barrage of levies on trading partners following his return to the White House in January.

Scholar who coined 'soft power' dies at 88

Joseph Nye, an influential political scientist and US policymaker who coined the term "soft power", has died, Harvard University announced Wednesday. He was 88. Nye, who died on Tuesday, joined Harvard's faculty in 1964 and served as dean of the Harvard Kennedy School as well as in positions under presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. He became best known for developing the term "soft power" in the late 1980s. As opposed to hard power, such as weapons and economic sanctions, soft power includes values and culture that can win over others.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

WORLD

India-Pakistan tensions rise

Calls mount for calm and efforts to prevent conflict from escalating

ISLAMABAD/NEW DELHI — The standoff between India and Pakistan continued on Thursday as the international community stepped up its calls for calm and restraint, fearing an escalation.

Pakistan's army said on Thursday that it shot down 25 Indian drones.

The army had so far shot down "25 Harop drones" at multiple locations across the country, it said.

"Last night, India showed another act of aggression by sending drones to multiple locations," Pakistan's military spokesman Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said from the army headquarters in Rawalpindi, where a drone was downed.

Crowds gathered at dawn in locations across Punjab and Sindh to gaze at the debris of the drones strewn across the ground. Blasts could be heard across Lahore.

Later on Thursday, the Indian defense ministry said in a statement that the country "neutralized" attempts by Pakistan to "engage" several military targets in its northern and western regions.

Indian armed forces also targeted air defense radars and systems at several locations in Pakistan on Thursday, it added.

The drone incident came a day after the worst violence between the nuclear-armed neighbors in two decades, in which at least 45 deaths were reported from both sides.

Among the tolls, 31 people were killed in an Indian attack on Pakistani territory and subsequent exchange of fire between Pakistani and Indian troops along the Line of Control, a spokesperson for the Pakistani army's media wing said on Wednesday.

India's government said on Thursday that 13 civilians had been killed by Pakistani fire since Wednesday.

Tensions between the two countries have grown since April 22, when gunmen killed 26 people, in



People watch the wreckage of a plane in Pulwama, India-controlled Kashmir, on Wednesday.

JAVED DAR / XINHUA

India-controlled Kashmir. India accused Pakistan of backing the militants who carried out the attack, something Islamabad has denied.

Countries have urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint to de-escalate their simmering tensions.

China urged India and Pakistan on Thursday to remain calm and exercise restraint from taking actions that would complicate the situation.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said China is concerned about the ongoing situation between India and Pakistan, which are both China's neighbors.

China opposes all forms of terrorism, Lin stressed, calling on both sides to act in the larger interest of peace and stability, abide by the United Nations Charter and other international law.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday voiced grave concern over the escalation of tensions between the two countries. Foreign

Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi left Teheran for New Delhi on Wednesday evening for talks with senior Indian officials.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry emphasized in a statement the importance of exerting all efforts to achieve calm and defusing the crisis, warning against further escalation.

Dialogue urged

Egypt called on India and Pakistan to exercise the highest degree of self-restraint and promote dialogue through diplomatic channels.

Turkiye's Foreign Ministry warned that the "provocative" steps could create "a risk of an all-out war". Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone on Wednesday with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, expressing Turkiye's readiness to "do its utmost to prevent further escalation of tensions" between the two sides.

Fearing an escalation, airlines, including United Airlines and Korean Air, rerouted or canceled flights

and about a dozen Indian airports were shut on Wednesday.

Images from flight tracking websites showed a long line of aircraft passing over Oman, the UAE and Kuwait after the attack, raising the possibility of airspace congestion.

In the past few days, India and Pakistan have shut their airspaces to each other's airlines. Global airlines like Lufthansa have also been avoiding Pakistan's airspace.

India's top airline IndiGo said it was canceling 165 flights until Saturday morning. Its shares were down 1.1 percent. Flights belonging to Air India, SpiceJet and Akasa Air were also canceled.

Zhou Jin in Beijing contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Indonesians confident of economy amid uncertainty

By LEONARDUS JEGHO in Jakarta
For China Daily

Indonesia remains confident about its domestic economy despite the current global economic climate, viewing its newly established sovereign wealth fund as a key driver for boosting investment.

Vice-Finance Minister Anggito Abimanyu, speaking at a dialogue forum in Jakarta on Wednesday, said Indonesia enjoyed 4.87 percent economic growth in the first quarter of this year. This was down from 5.11 percent in the same period last year, according to the Central Statistics Agency.

"Our exports are strong but we need to push our investment," Abimanyu said in his address at the forum. Held by credit rating agency Fitch Ratings, the forum discussed Indonesia's sovereign and financial institutions' outlook, as well as the country's corporate infrastructure, public finance and ratings outlook.

"Danantara will be one of the answers to boost investment and the strategic projects," the vice-minister said.

Danantara, or Daya Anagata Nusantara, is a sovereign wealth fund established by President Prabowo Subianto to consolidate and optimize government investment in supporting economic growth. Its funds will be allocated to more than just national strategic projects.

Danantara takes over ownership of state-owned companies from various sectors, including top state banks, the oil and gas company Pertamina, and the telecommunications company Telkom.

Its funds will be used to finance strategic projects, including those focused on food and protein production for children and pregnant women, industrial downstreaming, aquaculture, renewable energy and housing development.

Thomas Rookmaaker, head of Asia-Pacific Sovereigns at Fitch

Ratings, told the forum that it had just revised its outlook for Indonesia's economic growth to 4.9 percent for this year. Indonesia's 2025 state budget targets year-on-year economic growth of 5.2 percent and inflation of 2.5 percent.

Prabowo has set a target of 8 percent annual economic growth by 2029, citing Indonesia's average growth of 7.3 percent in the previous years.

External environment

Rookmaaker said "the external environment is not very friendly right now", with global growth slowing. He said that meeting Prabowo's 8 percent target will be challenging.

"That's one of the issues that we will focus on in the coming years," Rookmaaker said.

"But on the ground, small business owners tell us that they're very anxious," he said.

Arief Budiman, Danantara's managing director for finance, said Indonesia needs to invest in areas that can help boost its productivity. Global investors will only invest in areas in which they are already interested and comfortable with, he said.

Juli Budi Winantya, director of the economic and monetary policy department at Bank Indonesia, the nation's central bank, said Indonesia's economy is much stronger in the current situation.

He pointed out that the rupiah is currently depreciating by only about 4 percent, compared with about 30 percent in 2008. Inflation and nonperforming loans are much lower, Winantya said.

Vice-Finance Minister Abimanyu also told the forum that in addition to continuing tariff negotiations with the United States, Indonesia is now strengthening its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with BRICS and ASEAN member states.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Strikes kill at least 92 in the Gaza Strip as Israel prepares to ramp up offensive

GAZA — Israeli strikes across Gaza killed at least 92 people, including women, children and two journalists, officials said on Wednesday, as Israel prepares to ramp up its campaign in the strip, with the devastating fighting now entering its 20th month.

Two Israeli airstrikes on Wednesday targeted an area in central Gaza, killing at least 33 people and wounding 86, including several children, though the actual death toll was likely to be higher, health officials said.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes.

This came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday there is doubt over the survival of three hostages previously believed alive in Gaza. His statement came a day after US President Donald Trump said only 21 of 24 hostages believed alive had survived.

The news sent families of remaining captives in Gaza into panic.

The new bloodshed on Wednesday came days after Israel approved a plan to intensify its operations in the Palestinian enclave, which would include seizing Gaza, holding on to captured territories, forcibly displacing Palestinians to southern Gaza and taking control of aid distribution along with private security companies.

Israel is also calling up tens of thousands of reserve soldiers to carry out the plan. Israel says the plan will be gradual and will not be implemented until after Trump wraps up his visit to the region later this month.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 52,000 people in Gaza, many of them women and children, according to Palestinian health officials who do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Israel blames Hamas for the deaths, saying it operates from civilian infrastructure, including schools.



A Palestinian man reacts following an Israeli strike that hit Gaza City's Thai restaurant and its vicinity on Wednesday.

OMAR AL-QATTAA / AFP

Wednesday's strikes included two attacks on a crowded market area in Gaza City, health officials said.

Journalist Yahya Sobeih, who freelanced for several local outlets, was among those killed, according to Gaza's media office. He had recently shared a photo on Instagram of his newborn daughter. Another local journalist, Nour Abdu, was killed while covering an attack early on Wednesday at a school-turned shelter in Gaza City, the media office said.

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a group representing the families of the captives, demanded from Israel's government that if there is "new information being kept from us, give it to us immediately."

Humanitarian aid halted

Since Israel ended a ceasefire with Hamas in mid-March, it has unleashed fierce strikes on Gaza that have killed hundreds and captured swathes of territory. Before the truce ended, Israel halted all humanitarian aid into the territory, including food, fuel and water.

Gaza's civil defense agency said on Thursday that the lack of fuel had forced three-quarters of its emer-

gency vehicles to stop operating, more than two months into an Israeli aid blockade.

"Seventy-five percent of our vehicles have stopped operating due to a lack of diesel fuel," the agency's spokesman told AFP, adding that its first responders in the enclave were also facing a "severe shortage of electric generators and oxygen devices".

Meanwhile, dozens of community kitchens in Gaza shut their doors on Thursday due to a lack of supplies, closing off a lifeline used by hundreds of thousands of people in a further blow to efforts to combat growing hunger in the enclave.

Key interlocutors Qatar and Egypt said on Wednesday that mediation efforts were "ongoing and consistent". But Israel and Hamas remain far apart on how they see the fighting ending.

On Thursday, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said his country will do to Iran what it has done to Hamas in Gaza, days after an attack on Ben Gurion Airport by Houthi militia.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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‘Forceful’ steps to aid growth target

Policy measures mitigate short-term impact of US tariffs, expert says

By OUYANG SHIJIA, LI XIANG and ZHOU LANXU

China's economy is well-positioned to withstand the headwinds from the United States' unwarranted tariff policy and maintain its 2025 growth momentum with targeted macro policy support, said a senior economist.

Zhang Jun, chief economist at China Galaxy Securities, said he expects China's economic trajectory in 2025 to resemble a U-shape, with a slowdown in the second or third quarter due to trade headwinds, but a steady recovery driven by fresh stimulus rolled out after a key Party leadership meeting held in late April.

“As long as macro policies continue to be forceful and new measures are implemented quickly, achieving the preset annual growth target of around 5 percent remains possible,” he said during a recent exclusive interview with China Daily.

Citing the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Zhang said the tone-setting meeting came at a critical time as US tariff policies are expected to weigh on China's exports and the broader economy starting from the second quarter, indicating that policymakers are taking a forward-looking, effective and targeted macro policy approach to stabilize overall growth while mitigating external shocks.

Looking ahead, he said concrete steps are expected to follow to stabilize growth, employment and expectations while expanding domestic demand, which will help to offset the impact of US tariff hikes.

For the previously announced government bonds in March, the

country is expected to accelerate their issuance in the second quarter, and expedite the utilization of these funds to support concrete projects, said Zhang.

This year, a total of 21 tranches of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds — totaling 1.3 trillion yuan (\$179.66 billion), up 300 billion yuan from last year, and with maturities of 20, 30 and 50 years — will be issued from April 24 to Oct 10, according to the Ministry of Finance. “I believe there remains room for additional issuance of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds this year,” said Zhang.

Meanwhile, he noted the country will also ramp up fiscal spending for key areas such as healthcare, education, elderly care, and boosting fertility.

On the monetary front, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, announced on Wednesday that it will cut the seven-day reverse repos — a key policy benchmark for interest rates — by 10 basis points to 1.4 percent from 1.5 percent, effective on Thursday. And the reserve requirement ratio will be reduced by 0.5 percentage point, unleashing liquidity of around 1 trillion yuan. The cut will take effect on May 15.

“The mechanical action of rate cuts on confidence effects may still well be beneficial, while the bigger 50bp cut to the RRR underscores the supporting role of the central bank's liquidity operations in implementing the government's fiscal stimulus agenda,” said Louise Loo, lead economist at British think tank Oxford Economics.

Looking forward, though US tariff hikes may pose short-term pain, Zhang argued that could serve as a catalyst for China's long-term upgrading. “Tariffs are a short-term shock but also an opportunity to push forward China's transformation toward advanced productivity.”

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Photo: Yang Hongxing / For China Daily

Track maintenance



The Yuanping Track Division of China Railway Taiyuan Group Co Ltd recently launched a 15-day concentrated maintenance operation on the 355-kilometer Datong-Taiyuan railway line in Shanxi province. By upgrading 167 kilometers of tracks along the route, they will improve safety and reliability for passengers and cargo. Over 600 employees are taking part in the project. YANG HONGXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Toy makers hope buyers not tariff-ied

By WANG ZHUOQIONG wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

The time has come to place orders for toys for the 2025 holiday season. Chinese toy makers are enhancing their offerings by producing higher-value and more innovative toys to remain competitive and expanding into international markets, especially amid ongoing trade tensions, according to industry leaders.

Meanwhile, US retailers and families are expected to face increased costs and prices due to the higher tariffs imposed by the US government. “If these tariff policies remain unchanged, the additional costs — potentially doubling the arrival price of toys — will ultimately be passed on to US consumers,” said Liu Zhenlie, director of the Shenzhen Toys Industry Association and chairman of toy manufacturer Beiens.

According to Liu, the cost of reaching US retailers and distributors is expected to see a 100 percent increase. “The US Toy Association is strongly opposing the tariffs and is actively engaging in negotiations,” said Liu. The US association is currently urging the US government to grant immediate relief from tariffs on toys imported from China to ensure that toys are available on retail shelves in time for the holiday season.

Kathrin Belliveau, chief policy officer at the US Toy Association, said, “We hope to collaborate to protect children and keep learning and play tariff-free.”

Recently, the US Toy Association

conducted a survey to assess the potential business impact of the newly imposed 145 percent tariffs on toy imports from China.

With responses from over 400 member companies, the findings indicate that nearly half of small and medium-sized enterprises fear they may soon go out of business due to the current US tariff policy.

Mattel, the toy manufacturing giant and maker of Barbie, plans to raise prices on US toys due to tariffs, it said earlier this week in its earnings report.

Meanwhile, the toy manufacturing industry in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, is feeling the squeeze as the impact has been immediate and severe. “Roughly half of Shenzhen's toy orders come from the US and exports have virtually ground to a halt,” Liu said.

“From April to now, 90 percent of finished products are stuck in factories. Only major clients like Walmart, Target, and Amazon, who are willing to absorb the cost, are still taking deliveries.”

The latest tariffs threaten to reshape the global toy supply chain. Shenzhen, long a hub for high-quality toy production, is seeing orders gradually shift to Southeast Asia.

Liu said around 10 percent of companies with stable order volumes have already established operations in countries like Vietnam and Indonesia.

“Vietnamese factory rents are now comparable to Shenzhen — \$3.5 to \$5 per square meter — yet companies are still making the move,” Liu said.

Despite the shift, many firms are maintaining operations in domestic hubs such as Dongguan, Heyuan, and Huizhou in Guangdong province due to the strength of the integrated local supply chains.

As the trade tension escalates, Liu said the manufacturing mindset in China will double down on strategic, innovation-led production in a changing global landscape.

“AI toys, drones, robots — these categories rely on an integrated supply chain that only exists in China. High-value products with strong technical barriers will continue to be made here.”

To weather the storm, Chinese toy makers are also eyeing new markets. “We're increasing our focus on Southeast Asia and Europe. It's a long-term play, but it's essential,” Liu said. “Domestically, the competition will become more intense. We need to pivot and adapt.”

For toy makers with their own intellectual property and branded products, the impact of tariffs has been minimal so far.

Chen Feng, the secretary-general of the Chenghai Toy Association in Shantou, Guangdong province — a region known as the capital of innovative toys — said that less than 10 percent of the toys produced in the area are exported to the US.

“Our current focus is on developing our own IPs and adopting AI-powered automation to compete globally,” he said. “However, for US consumers, the situation is different; they will face higher prices.”

Forum to promote China, LAC growth

By ZHU WENQIAN zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

China will hold the 11th China-LAC Infrastructure Forum from June 10 to 12 in Macao, the only professional forum that promotes cooperation between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries in the field of infrastructure, as China continues to strengthen cooperation with Latin American countries.

The forum will focus on subjects such as financial innovation, green transformation and technological empowerment. Topics related to green infrastructure construction and digital infrastructure interconnection will be discussed, empowering regional economic recovery and sustainable development, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Since 2012, China has remained the second-largest trading partner of Latin America, and China stands as the largest trading partner of Latin American countries such as Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay, according to the General Administration of Customs.

“China and Latin America have strongly complementary economic structures and obvious advantages in economic and trade cooperation,” said Liu Dajiang, an official from the Ministry of Commerce.

“As a natural extension of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Latin American countries have established good cooperative relations with China in building the Belt and Road Initiative,” Liu said.

China has signed cooperation documents with 22 Latin American countries in building the BRI, effectively promoting practical cooperation between those involved. For the latest, Colombia said the country would sign a letter of intent to join the initiative in the coming days.

Meanwhile, China will hold the 16th International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum during the same period in Macao, highlighting the city's role in further developing the BRI.

As the largest and most influential annual industry event in the field of global infrastructure cooperation, more than 3,500 people from 67 countries and regions have confirmed their attendance, including more than 60 ministerial-level guests, over 20 senior executives from financial institutions and over 800 participants from international engineering and industrial chain enterprises.

As per tradition, the forum will publish the annual infrastructure development index and report of the BRI economies, as well as the 2025 infrastructure development index of Portuguese-speaking countries, according to China International Contractors Association, and Macao's Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute.

The forum will highlight Macao elements and promote their integration with major national development strategies and will comprehensively showcase the achievements of the city's diversified industrial growth. This year, the forum has further optimized the organization of the selection of exhibitors, exhibition content and supporting activities.

Yunnan-ASEAN trade expands steadily

By YIN MINGYUE and LI YINGQING in Kunming

Yunnan province has sustained strong foreign trade growth thanks in large part to deepening cooperation with member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a dynamic that underscores the strength of China-ASEAN economic ties despite mounting global trade protectionism, said experts.

According to Kunming Customs, ASEAN has remained Yunnan's largest trading partner for 20 consecutive years. In 2024, trade between Yunnan and ASEAN reached 109.32 billion yuan (\$15.1 billion) while in the first quarter of this year alone, bilateral trade totaled 23.96 billion yuan.

As China's gateway to South and Southeast Asia, Yunnan has seen increasingly close economic and trade cooperation with ASEAN in recent years. “The province's growing foreign trade potential continues to inject strong momentum into regional economic integration,” said Kunming Customs.

Of the total trade volume, Yunnan imported 3.22 billion yuan's worth

of agricultural products from ASEAN, up 26.5 percent year-on-year, and exports of agricultural goods reached 2.98 billion yuan, marking a 23.1 percent increase.

Notably, exports of fruits and nuts surged by 132.6 percent compared to the same period last year.

Fruits produced in Yunnan are highly complementary with those of ASEAN economies, and the establishment of a cross-border fruit corridor — bringing tropical fruits north and temperate fruits south — has enhanced the complementary trade advantages between China and ASEAN economies, fostering mutually beneficial cooperation, according to Kunming Customs.

“Yunnan enjoys geographic proximity and longstanding cultural ties with neighboring regions,” said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

“Recent progress in infrastructure and logistics has laid a further solid foundation for Yunnan and ASEAN to deepen cooperation based on their respective strengths,” Zhou added.

Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chi-

nese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that as China and ASEAN economies both prioritize manufacturing development, agreements covering the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area have strengthened industrial linkages. Improved logistics infrastructure between Yunnan and ASEAN economies has also helped remove traditional trade barriers and unlock new business opportunities.

Yunnan's collaboration with ASEAN offers a valuable model for broader China-ASEAN cooperation.

“Border and cross-border economic cooperation zones have played a key role in fostering industrial complementarity, strengthening supply and value chains, and enhancing regional economic resilience,” said Bai.

Data from the General Administration of Customs reveal that in 2024, ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner, with total bilateral trade reaching 6.99 trillion yuan, up 9.0 percent year-on-year and accounting for 15.9 percent of



A China-Laos Railway cargo train being loaded at Wangjiaying West Station in Kunming, Yunnan province. HU CHAO / XINHUA

China's total foreign trade. Exports to ASEAN stood at 4.17 trillion yuan, a 13.4 percent increase, while imports from ASEAN totaled 2.82 trillion yuan, up 3.2 percent.

Commenting on the US tariffs, Zhou noted that their impact extends to neighboring countries, placing shared pressure across the region.

“However, enhanced cooperation among regional partners can help mitigate these effects, reduce over-reliance on external markets and strengthen economic resilience within the region,” he said.

Undoubtedly, the trade conflict has had a negative impact on many coun-

tries, said Wang Yuzhu, an academic director of the Greater Bay Area-ASEAN Research Center at Shenzhen University.

“Trade wars benefit no one and are bound to have negative economic consequences,” he said.

Regardless of the global environment, regional collaboration remains the cornerstone of sustainable growth, and Wang believed that the cooperation between China and ASEAN should be seen as long-term.

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Briefly Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 68 pips to 7.2073 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.

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Thursday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.28

percent to 3352 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.93 percent higher at 10197.66 points. The combined turnover of these two indices stood at about 1.29 trillion yuan (\$179 billion), down from 1.47 trillion

yuan on the previous trading day. Shares related to aircraft manufacturing and motorbike industries led the gains, while those linked to the ceramic, as well as pesticide and fertilizer sectors were among the biggest

losers. The ChiNext Index, tracking China's Nasdaq-style board of growth enterprises, gained 1.65 percent to close at 2029.45 points.

By HU YUYAN

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On the evening of May 1, thunderous applause reverberated from the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg as the Chinese dance drama *Wing Chun* concluded its weeklong tour of Russia, marking another celebration of the 2024-25 China-Russia Years of Culture.

Created by the Shenzhen Opera and Dance Theatre, *Wing Chun* began its Russian tour on April 25, performing three shows each at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and the Mariinsky Theatre.

Blending martial arts with dance moves, *Wing Chun* features a main storyline focused on Wing Chun master Ip Man (1893-1972), who was Bruce Lee's mentor. The chronicle of how he overcame adversity and helped the downtrodden is juxtaposed with a secondary storyline, set nearly 50 years later, that follows a film crew in Shenzhen making a movie about the iconic kung fu style from South China. The crew embarks on a journey to bring Ip's story to life and realize their own dreams through the art of cinema.

The show features five types of Chinese martial arts including Wing Chun, tai chi and *baguazhang*, or eight-trigram palms. Originating from China's Lingnan region, which spreads mainly across Guangdong and Hainan provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Wing Chun is prominently featured in the drama.

Directed by Han Zhen and Zhou Liya, known for their works *Only Blue and Green* and *The Radio Waves That Never Die*, the production breaks away from traditional dance drama formats, fusing cinematic storytelling with martial arts and dance moves through a two-stranded storyline. This innovative approach has earned *Wing Chun* recognition for its artistic and cultural depth, embodying the pioneering spirit of Shenzhen.

Standing ovations

The production was a resounding success with Russian audiences, receiving standing ovations at every performance, according to EyeShenzhen, Shenzhen's official multilingual information portal. Critics and audiences alike lauded its artistry, touching performances and creative storytelling.

"I am shocked by what I saw," Konstantin Matveev, artistic director of the Boris Eifman Dance Academy, told EyeShenzhen. "The performance is great. Everything in it is perfect. The artists are surprisingly well-coordinated. They are real masters."

Drama critic Anna Konstantinova concurred, adding "It strikes me that this performance further confirms that movement, dance and the language of physical expression are universal and comprehensible to people everywhere on the planet?"

Anna Belich, a Russian choreographer, said: "I think such performances are very important now. These performances help establish a bridge of mutual understanding between cultures."

Irina Viner, former president of the Russian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation, told Shenzhen Special Zone Daily that while everyone is familiar with kung fu, *Wing Chun* is the only production that can present it as an art form on stage.

Diana, a member of the audience, said she chose to watch the show because she wanted to see something new. "I'm a bit overwhelmed; I cried three times already (during the first part). It was incredible," she added.

Natalia, a professor at the Russian State Institute of Performing Arts,

brought her mother to the show. She told Shenzhen TV: "The stage attracted me little by little ... I didn't want to stop watching. We were worried that we might not understand the story, but we understood it well. It was very beautiful."

Officials were likewise impressed. Olga Kazakova, chairwoman of the Russian State Duma Committee on Culture, said: "(The performers are) a group of absolutely incredible people. Even though they don't say a word, they tell everything with their bodies."

Nizami Mamishev, vice-chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St. Petersburg, praised the show as a "wonderful gift" for local people.

"The performance combines martial arts and dance, showcasing the beauty and culture of the Chinese people to the fullest," Mamishev told EyeShenzhen.

The prestigious Bolshoi Theatre and Mariinsky Theatre are considered world-class art venues. Since its founding in 1776, the Bolshoi Theatre has witnessed the journey of Russian ballet from its nascent stages to brilliance, with its grand architectural style and superb acoustics making it a sought-after artistic destination for artists worldwide. Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* premiered there in 1877, and the Bolshoi Theatre's rendition is still considered one of the best versions worldwide.

The Mariinsky Theatre dates back to the 18th century, when Catherine the

arts, Wing Chun places greater emphasis on quickly subduing the opponent to minimize harm.

Kung fu goes beyond mere victory or defeat; it is a journey toward personal development and self-cultivation. Ip Chun, the son of Wing Chun master Ip Man, said: "Traditional martial arts stress the equal importance of learning techniques and martial virtues. Therefore, Wing Chun places a strong emphasis on nurturing the traditional virtues of its students. Every master sets an example through their actions, hoping their disciples learn both the art and how to be good individuals."

Wing Chun showcases not only martial arts but also the traditional Lingnan fabric *xiangyunsha*, which is used in the costumes and has its intricate production process woven into the plot.

xiangyunsha is an ancient handmade fabric native to the Lingnan region. Its production is the most complex among silk products. The

silk is dyed using *shuliang*, a type of Chinese yam, then covered with mineral-laden river mud specific to the Pearl River Delta and repeated-

ly sun-dried. The entire process requires 14 techniques, 36 steps and a maturation period of one to three years before it is deemed ready for use.

Historical records show that as early as the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty, *xiangyunsha* was exported overseas on a large scale, selling at the high price of 12 taels of silver per bolt, making it as precious as gold.

By the 1930s, *xiangyunsha* had become popular across China, particularly in Shanghai and Beijing. It was highly coveted by prominent figures during the Republic of China period (1912-49), including Soong Ching Ling.

The peak period for Guangdong's silk industry was between 1922 and 1925, with thousands of silk weaving factories flourishing in towns like Xiqiao in Nanhai county and

ter in Moscow, said the *Wing Chun* crew not only created their own history but will go down in the history of cultural exchanges between China and Russia.

Worldwide success

With its artistic and cultural excellence, *Wing Chun* has become a benchmark for artistic creation in Shenzhen, reflecting the city's cultural confidence and innovative spirit.

Since its premiere in Shenzhen in December 2022, *Wing Chun* has been staged around 240 times in 57 theaters and across 47 cities, receiving widespread acclaim.

Starting its overseas journey in Singapore in September 2023, *Wing Chun* garnered praise from over 40 diplomats stationed in Singapore and various figures from Singaporean society. Following this, the show ventured into the overseas performing arts market through commercial performances.

In August 2024, it was performed in London at the historic Sadler's Wells Theatre for nine consecutive days, staging 12 shows. With an average occupancy rate of 80 percent, it set a record for the longest duration and the most performances of any Chinese dance drama in Europe. In October that year, *Wing Chun* achieved a 97 percent occupancy rate in four performances at the Palais des Congres in Paris.

Through its overseas performances, *Wing Chun* has showcased the profound heritage and innovative spirit of Chinese culture to the world. Simultaneously, the drama has promoted the international image of Shenzhen as a "city of dreams, youth and technology".

After the performance in St. Petersburg on April 30, Mamishev on the Committee for External Relations of St. Petersburg spoke with the crew of *Wing Chun* during a backstage visit. He said: "*Wing Chun* perfectly complements the prestigious Mariinsky Theatre. Although I have never been to Shenzhen, through this production I feel that Shenzhen is a city with a rich cultural atmosphere and deep heritage, much like St. Petersburg," according to a Guangming Daily report.

On April 24, an event to promote the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as a tourist destination was held in Moscow. *Wing Chun* was the opening program of the event.

Zhao Hong, deputy director of the Guangdong Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, told Shenzhen Special Zone Daily that Guangdong is developing the GBA as a world-class tourist destination in cooperation with the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, and the province looks forward to sharing opportunities with Russia and other international partners to jointly develop high-quality cross-border tourist routes.

She said they will take the 2024-25 China-Russia Years of Culture as an opportunity to promote cross-border dialogues between Lingnan culture, such as Cantonese Opera and lion dance, and Russian arts, such as ballet and symphony, in a bid to enhance mutual learning between the two regions.

During the planning stage of *Wing Chun*, Shenzhen had defined the production as a medium to spread traditional Chinese culture and conduct international cultural exchanges. In addition to organizing performances, Shenzhen hosts academic and promotional events on *Wing Chun* to deepen cultural communication. It also collaborates with companies such as BYD and Cathay Pacific to achieve cross-sector empowerment for the show.

Dance drama presents a timeless portrayal of fighting and fabric

By HU YUYAN

The dance drama *Wing Chun* revitalizes the ancient Chinese martial art of Wing Chun by infusing it with contemporary energy, offering a rich source of inspiration for modern performing arts.

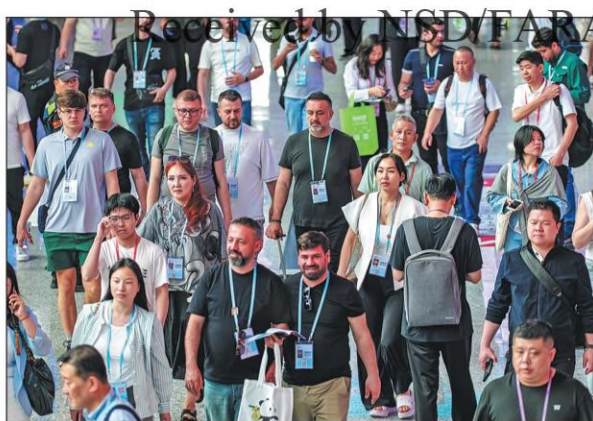
Originating in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Wing Chun was recognized as a representative intangible cultural heritage item of Guangdong province in 2012, eventually attaining national status in 2021.

Wing Chun is a practical martial art that incorporates fast punches, short knives, long sticks and close combat. It offers a streamlined and effective self-defense system, featuring core techniques such as *siu nim tao* (little idea). Compared with other traditional Chinese martial



A stage photo of the dance drama *Wing Chun* shows dancers in costumes made of *xiangyunsha*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

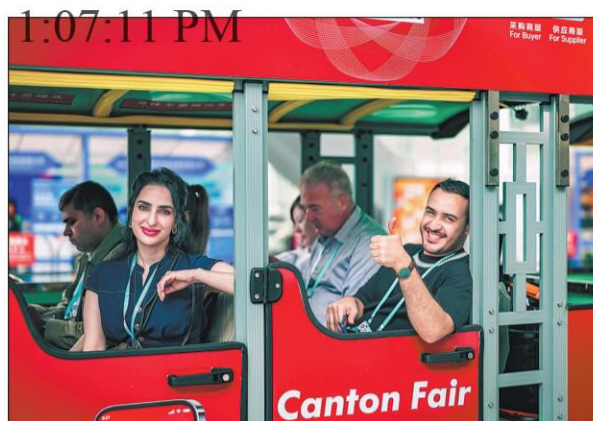
GLOBAL LENS



Attendees of the 137th Canton Fair walk at the China Import and Export Fair Complex on April 17. HUANG TAIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY



International attendees take photos with a logo of the 137th Canton Fair on May 2. HUANG TAIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Attendees take the shuttle bus of the 137th Canton Fair at the China Import and Export Fair Complex on May 4. HUANG TAIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

TREND of the TIMES

China's largest trade fair hits new high amid intense trade protectionism

The 137th China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, concluded on Monday in South China's Guangdong province, with organizers announcing the participation of over 288,000 overseas buyers.

This was a 17.3 percent increase from the previous session and hit a new high. There were 171,750 first-time attendees. Purchasers from countries participating in Belt and Road cooperation totaled 187,450, up 17.4 percent year on year and representing 64.9 percent of all overseas buyers.

The event also attracted over 527,000 online buyers from 229 countries and regions around the world.

A total of 4.55 million exhibits were showcased, including 1.02 million new products, 880,000 green and low-carbon products, and 320,000 smart products.

The inaugural service robotics zone emerged as a highlight of the event, with 46 Chinese manufacturers presenting over 500 advanced robots covering 60 industrial applications.

The fair proved that in spite of intensified trade protectionism and geopolitical tensions, China's products and market are still appealing to foreign business people, experts and business owners said.

"I've participated in the fair twice a year, every year, without missing a single session," said Afghan businessman Haji Torab Khan. Attending for the 11th time, Khan said the event plays a vital role in supporting Afghan commerce.

"Before attending, few commercial goods reached our market. Even imported products seemed to arrive by chance. Now, being part of this exhibition feels like walking through a garden, choosing what you want," he said.

Direct access to manufacturers allows Afghan traders to bypass intermediaries, cutting costs that would burden local consumers.

"At the fair, we connect directly with original factories. We meet the companies in person and buy from people we trust. This face-to-face interaction is essential and plays a

major role in our success," Khan said.

For MUSAFAER, who runs an electronics store in Afghanistan, the fair has allowed him to offer affordable, high-quality products to a population facing economic hardship.

Cheaper, accessible

"Chinese goods are cheaper and more accessible for Afghan people. For example, a refrigerator imported from Pakistan used to cost about 50,000 Afghanis (\$714). Now, we can purchase a high-quality one for about 13,000 Afghanis," MUSAFAER explained.

Chris Arthan, an exhibitor from the United States, said despite the impact of tariffs, China's role in the global supply chain remains crucial and widely respected.

Dinova, a retail company headquartered in France which finds most of its suppliers at the Canton Fair, has made China the core of its global sourcing strategy, according to its general manager Sonia Ben Behe.

"We have explored alternative countries, but no other region matches China's maturity for our product category. That's why, as part of a global sourcing strategy, China remains at the core," she said.

Niu Huayong, professor at the International Business School of Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the success of this year's China International Consumer Products Expo, or CICPE, and Canton Fair highlights that trade and cooperation remain key drivers of global development.

Amid current global trade turbulence, international buyers attending the Canton Fair still consider Chinese products highly attractive and even irreplaceable, he said.

Zhang Yansheng, an economist with the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said that the resilience of China's foreign trade against the backdrop of growing protectionism in the world is evident.

"At a time when the sentiment of anti-globalization grows, China will stick to the path of opening up at a high level, and promote economic globalization, as well as trade and investment liberalization," he said.

XINHUA



Robots interact with attendees at the 137th Canton Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 23. CHEN CHUHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

"We have explored alternative countries, but no other region matches China's maturity for our product category. That's why, as part of a global resourcing strategy, China remains at the core."

Sonia Ben Behe, general manager of French retail company Dinova



Attendees take photos of robot pets at the service robotics zone of the 137th Canton Fair on April 18. CHEN CHUHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Attendees wear eye massaging devices at the import exhibition area of the 137th Canton Fair on May 2. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



An international buyer inquires at a booth at the horticultural products exhibition of the 137th Canton Fair on April 23. CHEN CHUHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



International buyers find a selection of goods and talk business with their counterparts at the household textiles exhibition of the 137th Canton Fair on May 2. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

Good neighbors, friends and partners respect lessons of the past as they look to build future

For China, Russia is not only a major power but a neighbor, friend and partner that shares weal and woe and a border that spans more than 4,300 kilometers.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping said on his arrival for a state visit, Russia and China cannot move away from one another, they are good neighbors that have successfully explored the correct way for major countries to get along with each other, creating a new era of China-Russia strategic cooperation featuring the spirit of good-neighborliness, comprehensive strategic cooperation, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The independent, mature and tenacious China-Russia relationship has brought great benefits to the people of the two countries.

And under the strategic guidance of President Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, the two countries have continuously deepened their strategic partnership, which possesses a strong endogenous driving force.

In a further sign of the two countries' complementary advantages, and vast potential and space that exists for the two sides to deepen their practical cooperation, the two countries signed a series of economic and trade cooperation agreements during Xi's visit that are set to inject even more vibrant energy into the development of bilateral relations.

Major-country and neighborhood diplomacy are twin pillars of China's diplomatic work in the new era, it is thus natural that China should give importance to its relations with Russia.

Those standing on the right side of history and the side of fairness and justice can clearly see that the strengthening of the Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership is conducive to safeguarding the practice of true multilateralism and the legitimate aspirations of the Global South.

China and Russia are both major countries

with significant influence in the world. By enhancing their ability to coordinate with each other to respond to the challenges of the times, they can help the world address the peace, development, security and governance deficits that have become such pressing problems.

Humankind has come to a crossroads of unity or division, dialogue or confrontation, win-win cooperation or zero-sum games. By drawing on the lessons to be learned from the great victory in the World Anti-Fascist War, and working together to resolutely resist all forms of hegemonism and power politics, the international community can uphold both the principles and the sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

Both China and Russia bear the historical memory and truth in mind, believing that instead of fading with the passage of time, they should serve as a mirror for the present and an inspiration for the future.

The Sino-Russian relationship is neither directed against nor subject to the will of any third party. By solidifying the fundamentals for economic, trade and energy cooperation, exploring the potential for cooperation in areas such as scientific and technological innovation and green development, and fostering new growth drivers for cooperation, the two countries can create more opportunities for their joint revitalization and inject greater momentum into global development.

As Xi urged, the two countries should deepen their mutual trust to leverage the certainty and resilience of their partnership so as to strengthen their strategic coordination on the world stage.

This would provide a more solid guarantee for the shift toward a multipolar world and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, which in turn would enable the world to better withstand the many challenges that are accumulating.

Time to test Washington's sincerity

At the heart of the economic and trade tensions between China and the United States lies a narrative that, in trying to besmirch China's image, actually places the blame squarely on the US.

The narrative is that China has been a leech on the US, taking advantage of it in whatever way it can to free-ride its achievements, and that by doing so it threatens the US' shining glory as the pinnacle of human progress.

The principal proponent of this narrative has been the White House's chief trade adviser, Peter Navarro, who has been the driving force behind the trade war with China during the president's first term and the driving force behind the tariff attack of his second administration, which is aimed at coercing the US' trade partners to align with the US in decoupling from China.

Ironically, Navarro is likely to go down in infamy as having done as much damage to the US' status, credibility and economy, as various US administrations have with their financially draining and morally bankrupting military adventurism in the name of "American exceptionalism".

Having architected the tariff war, he has not only cashed out any vestiges of trust the international community may have had in the US as a team player, but also triggered the decline of the US stock market and turmoil in the US bond market and shaken the international currency status of the dollar. His claim that the tariffs would help push companies to expand manufacturing in the US, thus creating more jobs and boosting growth, is also looking more and more like wishful thinking.

The US Federal Reserve warned of the "risks of higher unemployment and higher inflation" as a result of the tariff rollout, as it announced another rate cuts pause on Wednesday.

US businesses are also warning of the risk of lost opportunities as a result of the US tariff policy and export restrictions targeting China. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said on Tuesday that China will likely be a \$50 billion artificial intelligence market in two to three years. "It would be a tremendous loss not to be able to address it as an American company. It's going to bring back revenues, it's going to bring back taxes, it's going to create lots of jobs here in the United States."

Just days after the US administration adopted its unlawful and unjustified unilateral tariffs on the US' trade partners, US officials were crowing that around 70 countries had already

called to strike deals. Navarro even predicted there would be 90 deals in 90 days. But more than a month has passed, and no deals have materialized.

The second round of tariff talks between the US and Japan ended last week with no major breakthrough made. And talks with the European Union, the US' largest trading partner, have also come to a standstill, with Brussels having expressed its resolve to hold its line in defense of the 27-member bloc's economic interests.

China, on its part, has taken resolute and forceful countermeasures to protect its rights and interests. And its legitimate defensive actions have served to clarify that it is the US that bears responsibility for the damage being done to the global economy and world trade system.

The self-harming repercussions of the US' unjustified, irrational and unreasonable tariffs and the appeal of China's principled stance have prompted the US administration to reach out to China, with a view to working something out.

China has indicated that it is willing to oblige, but made it clear that the planned communication in Geneva on the weekend is a prologue, not an ending. The US side should not mistake its willingness to engage in constructive discussions as a sign that it has in any way compromised its position, which stands firmly on the grounds of international legality and the importance of considering the broader interests of the international community.

China remains firmly opposed to bullying and hegemonic behavior of any form. By standing on clear principles and setting red lines before any negotiations take place, China has underscored its nuanced strategy that balances the imperative of safeguarding its core interests with a willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue to resolve differences, while championing a more equitable and democratic international order. And while it is willing to address the concerns of US industry and consumers, it remains vigilant about the sincerity of the US side and seeks tangible actions that validate good intentions.

The unilateral tariff measures of the US have had an adverse impact not only on the US itself, but also the global community. The US should adhere to the international economic and trade rules that the rest of the international community abides by, demonstrate sincerity in conducting mutually beneficial trade, and rectify its misguided view of international relations as being zero-sum.

Musa Gumus



Ties: Partnership is not directed against third countries

From page 1

Agreements from 2009 (15 million tons of Russian crude to China annually for 20 years), 2013 (365 million tons over 25 years), and 2022 (a 10-year contract for 100 million tons transiting through Kazakhstan) form the foundation of sustained and productive cooperation. Current annual deliveries under these three agreements alone amount to nearly 40 million tons.

Cooperation in the gas sector is also intensifying. This year, Russian gas exports to China are expected to hit a historic high of around 40 billion cubic meters, solidifying Russia's position as China's top gas supplier.

Energy cooperation between the two countries has of late become more intense and productive, Russian President Vladimir Putin said last year.

"Bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas, coal and electricity sectors is systematically expanding," he told a forum, adding that the country's supplies of energy resources to China are reaching record volumes.

However, Russian exports to China extend far beyond hydrocarbons. Agriculture represents another criti-

cal trade pillar, with China serving as the largest buyer of Russian agricultural products. In return, China is a key supplier to Russia of advanced technological equipment, electronics, automobiles, and consumer goods. Russia and China also collaborate extensively in mining, timber processing, high-tech industries, tourism, education, and other economic sectors.

A key challenge in expanding bilateral trade lies in conducting settlements amid Western sanctions on Russia's financial infrastructure. Both nations are systematically transitioning to settlements in national currencies, which now account for approximately 90 percent of payments. Multiple Russian companies have issued RMB-based debt instruments. Advanced solutions leveraging digital technologies, netting, and clearing mechanisms are being explored. Many settlement hurdles have already been overcome through joint efforts. Full resolution of settlement issues could potentially double Russia-China trade within five to 10 years.

Russian-Chinese investment collaboration is advancing dynamically. China is a major investor in Russia's

economy, with Chinese capital participating in nearly one-third of projects under the Russian Direct Investment Fund. Over the past decade, the RDIF has executed 10 projects with investments by Chinese partners totaling 780 billion rubles (\$9.5 billion). Priority sectors include industry, technology, logistics and agriculture.

Moscow is poised to become a key hub in the overland economic belt of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Joint efforts to develop the Northern Sea Route involve investments in port infrastructure, icebreaker fleet construction and Arctic research.

It is crucial that Russia-China trade and economic cooperation remains mutually advantageous, multidimensional and long-term, with significant growth potential. This partnership is not directed against third countries. Strong political will and business demand for deeper economic integration underscore the relationship, with both nations serving as reliable and privileged partners.

The author is an associate professor at Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

What They Say

Understanding between peoples guarantee for progress

President Xi Jinping extended congratulations to a China-Russia people-to-people and cultural exchange event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War on Wednesday. He stressed that strengthening people-to-people and cultural exchanges is essential to enhance mutual understanding, promote good-neighborliness and friendship, and consolidate the social and popular support for the development of bilateral ties.

To inject new momentum into mutual understanding and amity between the two peoples, refresh the development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, as Xi urged, media outlets of both countries should join hands to connect people's hearts.

The event was co-hosted by China Media Group and All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company. Russian President Vladimir Putin also sent a congratulatory message to the event.

It is one of the hundreds of events launched within the framework of the 2024-25 China-Russia Years of Culture that kicked off in May last year. Cultural events have been and will be held in 41 Chinese cities and 38 cities in Russia over the two years.

Other recent initiatives include the movie *Red Silk*, coproduced by Chinese and Russian filmmakers, that is currently showing in Russia and achieving great box office success, and a new version of the opera *Eugene Onegin*, created by artists

from the two countries, that has just debuted in China.

"The performances by numerous high-level Russian art troupes in China not only bring the essence of Russian culture to Chinese audiences, but also provide an opportunity for Russian artists to experience and understand China," Wang Ning, director of the China National Centre for the Performing Arts, told Xinhua in a recent interview.

China is not only paying great attention to the cultural events between the two sides to ensure their success but is also committed to making its people-to-people and cultural exchanges with Russia sustainable in the long run, so as to strengthen the bonds between the two peoples.

As such, multiple channels, platforms and mechanisms have been formed to promote cooperation and exchanges in culture, tourism, education and the media.

These exchanges, events and programs are proving effective in promoting mutual understanding between the younger generations of the two countries, according to a research project by a think tank on the branding and management of the China-Russia Art Festival for College Students based in Harbin, Heilongjiang province.

The project is based on China-Russia youth education and exchanges in Qiqihar University, where more than 2,600 Russian students have received education since 1993 through the university's cooperation projects with over 40 Russian colleges.

"Both China and Russia have splendid and rich culture and art resources, and the two peoples have a shared

memory of fighting fascists during World War II," said Zhao Lulu, a senior researcher with the think tank. "There remains great potential for the two nations to use smart ways, including new media platforms, artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies, to strengthen their culture and art exchanges, breathing new life into their historical bond by focusing on the younger generation who are more tech savvy."

While some regard bilateral pragmatic economic and trade cooperation and strategic coordination on the world stage between China and Russia as key pillars to their comprehensive strategic partnership, many experts such as Wang and Zhao believe it is the intensive people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two nations that have laid the solid foundation on which these pillars stand.

History shows that it is the mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual learning and mutual understanding realized through people-to-people and cultural changes that is the requisite for any substantial engagement between major countries and a defining characteristic of the healthy and sustainable development of Sino-Russian relations.

As experience shows, strengthening the bonds between peoples is an effective way to replace division with solidarity, confrontation with cooperation, and a zero-sum game with common development. In this way, people-to-people exchanges have been and should continue to be an essential part of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

GLOBAL VIEWS



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

EDUARDO TZILI-APANGO

Beyond geopolitics

The lesson to be learned on the 10th anniversary of the China-CELAC Forum is that South-South cooperation is not only possible, but also profoundly necessary

At the end of 2024, a South-South cooperation project aimed at promoting digital connectivity in less developed areas of Latin America and the Caribbean was fully implemented. This project was jointly led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, China, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. It is estimated to have indirectly improved the lives of over 4,000 people in 12 LAC

countries. Meanwhile, the United States has threatened to regain control of the Panama Canal — the latest in a series of geopolitical threats to LAC countries since Donald Trump's electoral campaign, citing security concerns related to migration and drug trafficking.

This contrasting situation clearly highlights China's constructive policy, which diverges from the US' unilateral diplomacy toward the region. As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated at a news conference on the sidelines of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing in March 2025, "there is only mutual support in this cooperation, no geopolitical calculations".

In 2023, US investments in the region declined by 29.7 percent year-on-year. Investments in LAC countries that are members of the Belt and Road Initiative rose by 92 percent in 2023, taking 20.5 percent of all Chinese BRI overseas investments. While the US remains the most important trade and investment partner for LAC countries, there is a growing consensus that its economic presence is in decline — a trend likely to accelerate as a result of its "America First" policies.

The US' cooperative approach toward the LAC region has been unstable. During the first Trump presidency, the US government launched the Growth in the Americas initiative, aimed at channeling public and private funds into infrastructure projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, aside from some memorandums of understanding signed with Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and a few known infrastructure projects, the initiative failed to meet the region's infrastructure needs. The Growth in the Americas initiative was ideologically biased, as the US government refused to fund coun-

Indeed, the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the China-CELAC Forum in 2025 illustrates the increasing strength of China-LAC South-South cooperation. Sustaining cooperation beyond geopolitics is both a necessity and a challenge in the face of US diplomatic instability.

tries politically adversarial to it, such as Nicaragua and Venezuela. It was also criticized domestically for its ineffectiveness in addressing human rights issues in the LAC region.

Later, during former president Joe Biden's term, the Growth in the Americas initiative was replaced by the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, aimed at promoting economic integration and democracy with selected LAC countries. APEP effectively dismantled what little progress the Growth in the Americas initiative had made, adopting a different approach. In 2024, the Americas Partnership Investor Network was launched under the APEP framework, pledging to invest \$1 billion in early-stage companies and entrepreneurs in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, another change of administration soon followed.

As one of his initial actions during his second term, President Trump ditched APEP — calling it a "lazy effort". These shifting approaches suggest that US interests in the LAC region are primarily geopolitical, aimed at containing China's influence, rather than genuinely supporting economic development.

In contrast, China's cooperative and comprehensive approach has proven to be steady and dependable. First, there is ongoing political dialogue and engagement. Since its establishment in 2015, the China-

CELAC Forum has been deepening bilateral ties, creating 43 thematic sub-forums to coordinate efforts in areas such as agriculture, anti-corruption enforcement, defence cooperation, disaster management, green development, poverty alleviation, think tank exchanges and scientific and technological innovation. In December 2024, the Fourth China-CELAC Political Parties' Forum was held in Beijing, bringing together representatives from nearly 100 national and regional political parties across 30 LAC countries. No similar multilateral effort exists between the US and the LAC nations.

Furthermore, China and the LAC region have seen uninterrupted economic exchanges. Over the past two decades, China's trade with LAC has increased 41-fold, from \$12 billion in 2000 to around \$500 billion in 2024 — making China the top trading partner of South America and the second-largest trading partner in the LAC region overall. Today, Latin America is the second-largest recipient of Chinese investment, after Asia, particularly in infrastructure and energy. The China Development Bank has loaned approximately \$160 billion to the LAC countries since 2005.

Indeed, the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the China-CELAC Forum in 2025 illustrates the increasing strength of China-LAC South-South cooperation. Sustaining cooperation beyond geopolitics is both a necessity and a challenge in the face of US diplomatic instability. To maintain the momentum in bilateral relations, China and the LAC countries must practice strategic patience and build a community with a shared future by crossing the river by feeling the stones, and they both must promote strategic autonomy so as "not to become someone's backyard", as Foreign Minister Wang put it. China-LAC relations demonstrate that South-South cooperation is not only possible, consistent and desirable — it is profoundly necessary.

The author is an associate professor of international relations at the Metropolitan Autonomous University and a senior fellow on China at the Mexican Council on Foreign Affairs. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Foundational inspiration

70 years after Bandung: The dynamics between Africa, Asia and the global powers are still evolving

The post-Bandung Conference era witnessed sustained pressure on Africa-Asia relations from Northern Hemisphere powers. Following the wind-down of the Cold War since the 1990s, the cooperative paradigm between

Africa and Asia has undergone a substantive transformation, primarily driven by intensified intergovernmental economic interactions. This evolving relationship has witnessed the emergence of the Global South powers as pivotal actors, fundamentally reshaping cross-regional cooperation frameworks.

The evolution of Africa-Asia relations since the 1955 Bandung Conference reveals a development trajectory characterized by cooperative multilateralism, reciprocal assistance mechanisms, and sustained advocacy for equitable global economic architectures amid the persistent external meddling of the United States-dominated West. Despite this outside interference, Asia and Africa, navigating post-colonial transitions, have established substantive cooperation grounded in shared historical experiences of colonial subjugation. From the beginning, the financial architecture transformation, which has intensified African engagement through mechanisms such as the New Development Bank, has been marked by the very feature of reciprocal and respectful development cooperation and partnerships between the increasingly visible BRICS nations. Moreover, the African Continental Free Trade Area, designed to address market fragmentation on the continent, has positively responded to persistent intra-African trade underperformance despite prior regional integration efforts. This strategic recalibration underscores Asia's renewed positioning as Africa's development partner.

The Bandung principles continue to underpin China-Africa cooperation, emphasizing mutual development objectives, value alignment and cultural dialogue. Particularly noteworthy is the enduring relevance of anti-colonial solidarity in addressing contemporary challenges such as poverty reduction, climate resilience and territorial sovereignty preservation. China employs multiple engagement frameworks ranging from bilateral

agreements to multilateral platforms such as the African Union and the Forum on China Africa Cooperation predominantly driven by economic complementarity. China's commitments to Africa surpassed \$60 billion during the period from 2000 to 2013, channeled predominantly into infrastructure development, information-communication technology, agricultural modernization and social welfare enhancement.

Historically, Africa's economic relations and investment deals with Asian countries have been sideline issues in geopolitical discourse largely due to the unbroken neocolonial economic grip of the Western countries on the continent. However, strategic priorities have increasingly transitioned from industrial fragmentation toward implementing diversified strategies to navigate the escalating great power rivalries, particularly counterbalancing the US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region. The increasing relevance of political determinants in trade-investment decision-making has compelled the Association of Southeast Asian Nations members and other Asian states to recalibrate their diplomatic postures while forging stronger multilateral ties with African nations. Chinese investment in Africa, in this respect, has been fueled by increasing prosperity, immense domestic demand for resources, and the construction of infrastructure for growth. These intersecting imperatives have necessitated the formulation of novel Africa-Asia cooperative frameworks, particularly regarding shared positions challenging post-Cold War US geopolitical hegemony and Western-dominated international architectures following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, China maintains its position as the largest developing nation with an unparalleled workforce and cutting-edge technological advancements in the most competitive areas such as 5G technology, artificial intelligence and satellite navigation systems, etc. Africa, on the other hand, has this immense demographic advantage to employ and transform the potential of such digital infrastructures with its young and fast-growing population, which represents one of the world's most significant emerging markets.

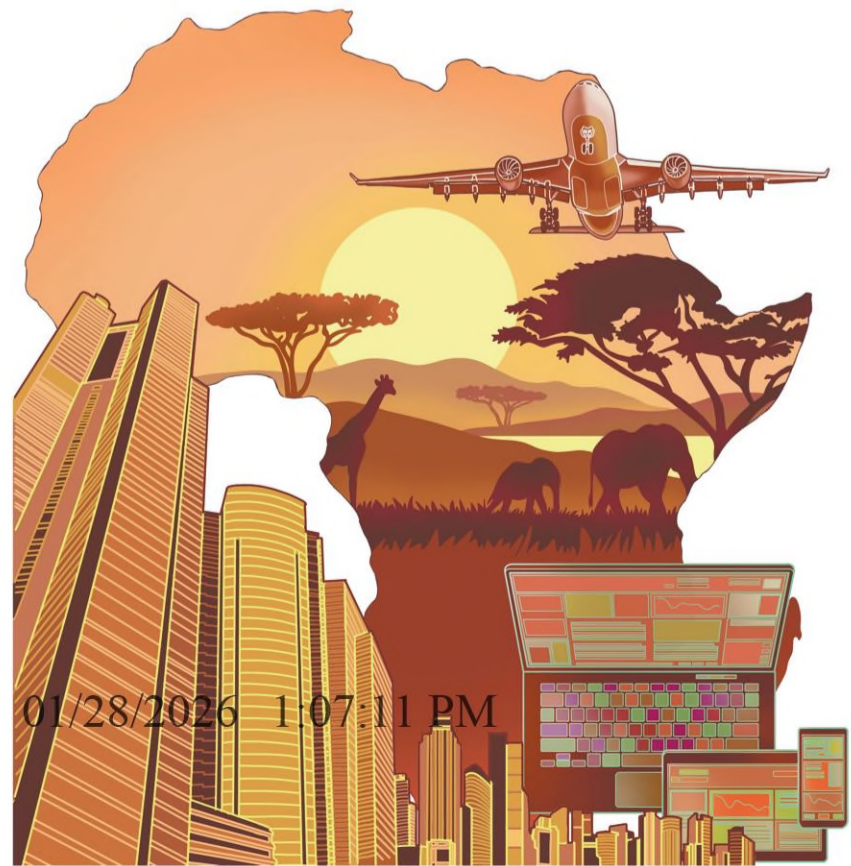
While this potentially signals transformative opportunities for Africa's international engagement, substantial challenges still

persist in many aspects from education and technological capacity building to a long-term sustainable structure of the development trajectory, all of which will not be resolved without significant support from African nations. By upholding the Bandung Spirit and moving beyond mere rhetorical commitments to peace, security and cooperative multilateralism, Asian states can confront the imperative to systematically analyze the structural forces reshaping their security paradigm. This necessitates developing coordinated, comprehensive response mechanisms through enhanced regional cooperation frameworks and conflict prevention architectures.

Seven decades after the Bandung Conference, its seminal principles persist as a constructive force in global consciousness, diplomatic assemblies and institutional frameworks. The contemporary Africa-Asia relational paradigm, emerging from this historical watershed, demonstrates dynamic multilateral alliances and a complex interplay of geopolitical dynamics. The emergence of BRICS, the strategic consolidation of ASEAN and the expanding Chinese development engagements in Africa collectively manifest a reconfigured geopolitical architecture with profound implications for regional stability, African developmental trajectories, and the restructuring of international relations.

The Bandung Conference, which was a significant moment for South-South cooperation, has injected a common sense of identity and solidarity among emerging economies through the steadfast assertion and articulation of solidarity principles and the consistent adherence to collaborative frameworks designed to counterbalance neocolonial practices and economic hegemony. This foundational legacy continues to energize and empower contemporary Africa-Asia relations, presently distinguished by the intensive focus on sustainable development paradigms and the maintenance of a multipolar global governance structure that truly advocates equity and shared development for all.

The author is deputy director of the Center for Francophone Studies and a research fellow at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

01/28/2026 1:07:11 PM

LIFE

On Wednesday, the country's biggest box-office sensation *Ne Zha 2* — employing nearly 4,000 animators for the five-year production — has earned an astonishing 15.8 billion yuan (\$2.19 billion) globally, since its Spring Festival debut.

The animated film has shattered records to become the world's fifth highest-grossing film, and far surpassed the country's previous highest-grossing film *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, a war epic that raked in 5.75 billion yuan in 2021.

For that, the 15th Beijing International Film Festival, one of China's best-known cinematic events, for the first time held an exhibition of 150 hand-painted posters by Yang Yu, better known as *Jiaozzi* (dumping), the director of the *Ne Zha* animated franchise. Each artwork was created to celebrate the film's memorable moments — one for every additional 100 million yuan earned at the box office.

The film also became one of the Beijing festival's hottest buzzwords.

Jiang Wen, jury president of the film festival's Tiantan Award, praised Yang's groundbreaking success, calling it a "starting point" for Chinese cinema — not its peak.

"There are so many more 'dumplings' hidden beneath. You don't serve them one by one; they come plate after plate," Jiang, the maverick filmmaker known for his sharp wit, quipped during his masterclass on April 25, playing on the untapped potential of Chinese filmmakers.

Cedric Behrel, co-founder of British film distributor Trinity CineAsia — which acquired distribution rights for *Ne Zha 2* to 37 countries and regions — says the film is the highest-grossing Chinese-language movie in Europe in two decades, praising how Chinese filmmakers' distinctive storytelling skills have transcended cultural barriers to resonate with overseas audiences.

Ying Xujun, deputy president of CMC Inc, the Chinese company handling *Ne Zha 2*'s release in North America and Oceania, reveals that the film performed well in the two regions, exemplified by its screenings in 1,000 cinemas in the United States and 162 theaters in Australia and New Zealand. She also reveals that *Ne Zha 2*, following its first run with English subtitles, is producing an English-dubbed version, with the voiceover cast set to feature some "surprise" actors.

The film's historic success — highlighted by its status as the highest-grossing film ever in a single market — proves the enduring power of cinema, demonstrating that the theatrical experience will never fade, Ying adds.

This year, the annual film festival ran from April 18 to 26, gathering hundreds of celebrities and industry insiders to exchange ideas, share stories behind classic films, and analyze new trends in the domestic industry.

Setting a new record, the festival received 1,794 submissions from 103 countries and regions contending for the Tiantan Award, surging by a remarkable 18.9 percent year-on-year. In addition, the festival's competition sector, tailored for short videos since 2022, attracted this year over 6,300 entries from more than 30 countries and regions.

Telling backstories

Shining stars, prestigious filmmakers, and rarely screened films are the elements that define a film festival. At the Beijing event, three masterclasses stand out — hosted by actor-director Jiang Wen, auteur



A forum at the 15th Beijing International Film Festival discusses the growth potential of the domestic film market after the blockbuster success of *Ne Zha 2*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Film veterans put success in focus at Beijing festival

Directors, industry leaders and actors share experiences, memories and predictions in masterclasses, **Xu Fan** reports.



Left: Jiang Wen (center), jury president of the festival's prestigious Tiantan Award, poses for selfies with fellow celebrities during the closing ceremony. Right: Actress Ni Ni, also a Tiantan Award juror, on the opening ceremony's red carpet alongside actors Zhu Yilong (center) and Wu Lei. PHOTOS BY CHEN ZEBING / CHINA DAILY



Jia Zhangke, and French actress Isabelle Huppert — offering cinephiles a window into the lesser-known stories behind their iconic works.

Known for his bold visuals and dark humor, Jiang has directed six films, five of which — including *Hidden Man* — are adaptations of novels. What has caught the attention of some critics is how drastically these adaptations differ from the original stories.

"What I brought to the screen is what I envisioned in the novels. When I read a novel, many images come to mind that are often different from the original tale. But the

novels are still important because they stimulate my imagination," Jiang explains.

Speaking about *Hidden Man*, an adaptation of Zhang Beihai's *Xia Yin* (The Reclusive Hero), Jiang recalls how the novel reminded him of old Beijing landscapes. These memories trace back to his childhood when, at age 10, he moved with his parents into a residential compound that once belonged to a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) princess.

Jiang emphasizes that the most important reason for a young filmmaker to begin a filmmaking career is the capability to express an independent perspective; everything

else, including technical skills, comes later.

Interestingly, Jiang reveals that by the time he finishes writing a script, he already has the entire film visualized. "I don't need to refer to the script while shooting. I remember every line, whether mine or another character's," he shares, offering a glimpse into his unique filmmaking process.

Director Jia Zhangke, winner of multiple prestigious international awards including the Golden Lion at the 63rd International Venice Film Festival, also shares insights into his filmmaking journey during his masterclass.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of *Mountains May Depart*, which won Best Screenwriter at the 10th Asian Film Awards. For the first time, Jia unveils one of his motivations behind the film.

"There's a scene in the movie where Zhao Tao's character tries to transport her father's body back to their hometown after his sudden passing. That storyline came from my own life: My father died in another city and my older sister and I had to take him home in an ambulance. The trip took nine hours," he recalls.

"It was the hardest moment of my life. But when I was filming it, that

pain was buried deep in my heart. This huge emotional force kept me going and drove me to finish the film," he adds.

French actress Huppert, 72, recalls collaborating with South Korean director Hong Sang-soo on films like *In Another Country*, *Claire's Camera*, and *A Traveler's Needs*. "Hong is a special director. His signature style involves shooting films in extremely short periods but investing heavily in preparation," Huppert recalls, using *Claire's Camera* as an example, which took only six days to shoot. *In Another Country* was filmed over nine days.

Evolution in technology

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, its potential to impact and transform the film industry became a major discussion topic at the festival.

Director Jia believes that AI will soon bring sweeping changes to human thought, lifestyles, and possibly, entire civilizations.

"The film industry was born out of technological evolution," he says. "Few insiders are immune to the changes AI is bringing. However, the content generated by AI relies on existing data, such as photos or videos found online. Even so-called 'new' images are merely rearranged elements of what's already available, which means AI-generated content often lacks true creativity and innovation."

Nevertheless, Jia maintains an open attitude: "AI technology is still evolving; it's unformed and immature. Instead of rejecting or overhyping it, we should explore its potential and learn how to make the best use of it in everyday life and filmmaking."

For most seasoned professionals in the industry, AI has introduced conveniences that could potentially redefine the rules of filmmaking.

Describing AI's research capability as a "super library," Yu Baimei, an established scriptwriter-director known for the sports film *Ping Pong: The Triumph*, explains how it greatly reduces the time needed during the initial scriptwriting phase, especially when gathering archival materials.

"You can think of AI as a superhuman entity that holds nearly all of humanity's accumulated knowledge, spanning literature, mathematics, law, and more. Right now, it serves as an excellent assistant but within five to 10 years, it could evolve into something far beyond just a tool," says Yu.

Zhang Ke, a veteran scriptwriter known for blockbusters like *The Volunteers* franchise, believes young writers should approach AI with caution. He advises them to verify historical and military information using multiple sources rather than relying solely on AI.

"If a young person's goal is to become one of the best scriptwriters in China, it's better not to rely on AI. Instead, read, travel to different places, spend time dreaming, or even go through inner struggles," he suggests.

Sharing that he recently focused on reviewing some great works, Zhang says that the most compelling lines are born from raw, irrational emotions that flow directly from the creator's heart. "That's something AI can never create," he adds.

Contact the writer at zufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Online Scan the code to watch the video.



TCM gets a needle into New Zealand's healthcare system

WELLINGTON — On April 27, residents of New Zealand's South Island were immersed in the world of traditional Chinese medicine at an exhibition held in Christchurch.

Visitors to the event explored several TCM practices, including pulse diagnosis, acupuncture, *tui na* massage (one of the oldest massage techniques in the world), herbal sachet making, tai chi, and *Baduanjin* (a form of *qigong*) exercises.

The Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine showcased innovative technologies, such as the Health Smart Ring and Smart Health Evaluator. These devices,

incorporating cloud computing and artificial intelligence, offer personalized TCM health testing and evaluation services to the New Zealand public, the organizer says.

With a history that spans thousands of years, TCM emphasizes holistic approaches to disease prevention, treatment, and well-being. The Chinese Consul General in Christchurch He Ying noted at the opening ceremony.

Today, TCM has spread to nearly 200 countries. Acupuncture and *tui na* massage are now formally recognized within New Zealand's healthcare system, benefiting people from

diverse backgrounds, she says.

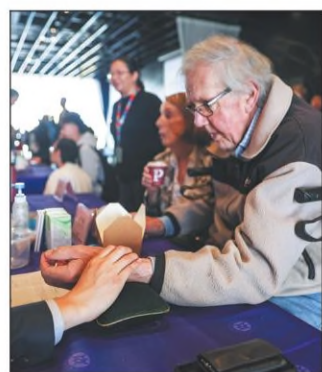
Meng Yu, vice-president of the Shanghai University of TCM, adds that several doctors in New Zealand have pursued further education, deepening ties between the two countries and advancing Chinese medicine's academic development. Meng hopes for stronger China-New Zealand cooperation using traditional medicine to bridge the two cultures.

Public demand for TCM services continues to grow, says Robin Kerr, president of Acupuncture New Zealand.

Resident Mary Timings partici-



Left: An expert from Shanghai showcases traditional Chinese exercises to a Christchurch audience in New Zealand on April 27. YAN XINYUN / XINHUA Right: A New Zealander gets a pulse check during the event. LONG LEI / XINHUA



pated in the event and shared that TCM offered her a refreshing, new perspective on health and well-being.

The event, attended by over 100

representatives from local communities and TCM organizations, was co-organized by the Chinese Consulate General in Christchurch, the Shanghai University of TCM, the

Confucius Institute at the University of Canterbury, and Christchurch City Libraries.

XINHUA

LIFESHANGHAI



The exhibition *Chen Yifei: A Retrospective on Art and Legacy* at the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai is the largest and most comprehensive since Chen's death in 2005. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Exhibition honors artist's illustrious career

Oil painter, filmmaker, director, designer, record-breaker, and more — Chen Yifei receives a well-deserved retrospective 20 years after his premature passing, **Zhang Kun** reports.

Twenty years after his premature death while filming a movie in Shanghai, one of modern China's most important artists, Chen Yifei (1946-2005), is having a retrospective in Shanghai focusing on his life and career.

Held at the Museum of Art Pudong from April 26 to Oct 12, *Chen Yifei: A Retrospective on Art and Legacy* gathers 80 of his original oil paintings, consisting of representative pieces from the important periods of his career, says Feng Yuan, chief curator of the exhibition, honorary president of the China Artists' Association and former vice-chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

"This retrospective is the largest and most comprehensive showcase of Chen's life and works," says Li Minkun, deputy general manager of Shanghai Lujiuzui Group and chairman of MAP. "We made great efforts to bring dozens of his other works, such as manuscripts, sketches, watercolor paintings, movie clips, magazines and clothing, covering a wide range of subjects closely connected to all aspects of Chen's life."

Chen was a well-regarded artist, art director and film director. Born in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, he moved to Shanghai with his parents as a child, where he received art training in realism and was influenced by Russian art. In the 1960s, he began drawing nationwide attention for his heroic realism paintings, often featuring glorified depictions of soldiers, workers and historical events in China throughout the 1900s.

Seizing of the Presidential Palace is his most celebrated painting of this period, jointly created by Chen and Wei Jingshan from 1976 to 1977. The painting won first place in the 1977-1982 National Competition of Historical Paintings on Revolution. It is a monumental work made for and permanently displayed at The Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution. A life-size replica is on display at the ongoing exhibition.

In 1980, Chen went to the United States and studied at Hunter College in New York. In 1983, he held



A life-size replica of Chen Yifei's epic painting *Seizing of the Presidential Palace* is on exhibition at MAP in Shanghai. The original painting is on permanent display at The Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution in Beijing. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

his first solo exhibition in the US at the Hammer Gallery in New York, featuring a series of paintings depicting landscapes and traditional lifestyles in the water towns, which received wide acclaim.

One of the paintings during that period, *Hometown Memories: Twin Bridges*, was brought to China by Armand Hammer, founding director of the Hammer Galleries, during his visit to Beijing in 1985.

Another painting of the period, *Lingering Melodies from the Xunyang River* (1991), depicts three female musicians in Chinese costume of the early 1900s. The painting set a record as the first one-million-yuan (\$137,000) sale of a Chinese oil painting, marking the debut of China's contemporary oil painting artworks in the international auction market. He contin-

ued to break international auction records in the following years.

Rebecca Yang Yuancao, chairman of Christie's China, told China Daily, "I see Chen Yifei's significance as an artist in that he connected the past to the next generation."

Chen's art was deeply rooted in the academic traditions of Chinese oil painting of the 20th century and, with his extensive aesthetic vocabulary, he responded to the social changes and cultural awakening following China's reform and opening-up, she says.

Chen combined a keen observation of reality with the persistent pursuit of visual beauty to create unique visual storytelling. He not only expanded the expressive power of Chinese oil painting but also opened up a path for later artists to be seen by the world.

"By reexamining his work in the context of globalization, Chinese art has engaged in a deep dialogue with international modernity while sticking to its local narrative. This is why Chen is still compelling," Yang says.

While Chen's most significant contribution to China's contemporary art scene was his achievements in oil painting, Feng told the media at the opening of the exhibition, "He was passionate about a variety of visual arts and a strong advocate and promoter of the idea of Greater Art. His career transitioning to making movies was closely related to his paintings."

As a painter, Chen was especially good at portraits. "Film has special advantages in portraying humanity and psychological depth," says Feng. "As a fellow artist, I under-

stand why he would cross over into film and turn to making movies," Feng adds.

His first movie, *Reveries on Old Shanghai*, was featured at the inaugural Shanghai International Film Festival in 1993. Chen went on to direct *Evening Liaison* and *Escape to Shanghai*. In 2005, he fell ill during the shooting of his last film, *The Music Box*, in Shanghai and died at age 59.

During the latter part of his career, Chen proposed Greater Art — the idea that art and beauty are vital to modern living. His younger brother Chen Yiming recalled Chen Yifei's excitement for The Bauhaus, a design school in Germany that existed from 1919 to 1933, after returning home from a tour in Europe.

"My brother strongly believed



A portrait of Chen Yifei. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

designs could make life better and had great faith in the power of beauty," Chen Yiming says. "He advocated for building more beautiful houses and wearing more beautiful clothes that would make Chinese society better. He was an advocate for beauty and considered it his social responsibility."

Chen Yifei founded the clothing brand Layefe in 1997 and quickly opened more than 100 shops in high-end malls across the country.

In 2001, the lifestyle and home decor shop Layefe Home opened in Shanghai. The same year, he launched Vision magazine.

The artist also played an important role in developing Shanghai's Pudong New Area as a special consultant on urban planning and design.

The MAP exhibition also showcases a replica of *Light of the East -- Sundial*, a public sculpture codesigned by Chen and French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier in 2000. The steel structure still stands as an iconic symbol of Shanghai's urban landscape at the intersection of Century Avenue and Yanggao Road.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Becoming the architect of one's own luminous legacy

By ZHANG KUN

The Power Station of Art, Shanghai, is giving Ieoh Ming Pei (1917-2019), the Chinese American architect who built the glass pyramid in front of the Louvre in Paris, his first full-scale retrospective exhibition on the Chinese mainland.

From April 26 to July 27, the exhibition *I. M. Pei: Life Is Architecture* features more than 400 items, including original drawings, architectural models, photographs, films, and other archival documentation from institutional and private holdings, many of which have never been exhibited.

Known as the most internationally influential Chinese-born American architect of the 20th century, Pei won the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1983, the most prestigious award in the world of architecture. He designed many recognizable, high-profile projects, such as the National Gallery of Art East Building in Washington DC, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building in Beijing, the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong, the Suzhou Museum in Jiangsu province, and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar.

Initiated by M+, a museum dedicated to showcasing contemporary visual culture in Hong Kong, the



Above: Ieoh Ming Pei portrait taken in Massachusetts, 1965. **Middle:** An installation at the Shanghai exhibition *I. M. Pei: Life Is Architecture*. **Right:** Pei walking up the stairs at the National Gallery of Art East Building in Washington DC. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



If you go

I.M. Pei: Life Is Architecture
April 26-July 27, Tue-Sun, 11 am-7 pm (last entry at 6 pm)
7F, Power Station of Art, 678 Miaojiang Road, Huangpu district, Shanghai

exhibition was first held in Hong Kong from June 2024 to January. The current exhibition in Shanghai marks the first full-scale retrospective of the legendary architect on the Chinese mainland.

"We are delighted to partner with the Power Station of Art to bring this retrospective to a broader audience, particularly focusing on Pei's formative years and architectural projects in China. This exhibition reintroduces Pei and his significant contribu-

tions while illuminating often-overlooked facets of his remarkable career," says Suhanya Raffel, the museum director of M+.

The exhibition takes a close look at Pei's life and works through six areas of focus that not only define his unique processes, but also create a dialogue with social, cultural, and biographical trajectories, showing that architecture and life are inseparable, says Shirley Surya. Surya serves as the curator for the design

and architecture section at M+ Hong Kong and is a co-curator of the exhibition with Aric Chen, the general and artistic director of Nieuwe Instituut, New Institute in Rotterdam in the Netherlands and incoming director of the Zaha Hadid Foundation in London.

Pei was born in 1917 in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. His father Tsuyee Pei was a prominent banker. The family moved to Hong Kong when he was a baby, and then

to Shanghai when he was 10. Pei spent his summer holidays in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, his ancestral hometown. He liked to play in the family's garden, which today is widely recognized as a representative case of Jiangnan garden art known as *Shizilin*.

It was in Shanghai where Pei, as a teenage boy, was introduced to the world of modern architecture. Of the Park Hotel in the city center, completed in 1934, which remained

the tallest building in Asia for half a century, Pei remarked: "I was fascinated by the height of the Park Hotel, and from that moment on, I aspired to be an architect."

"These early multicultural spatial experiences inspired him to focus on exploring and interpreting locality and historical archetypes within a transcultural and modern milieu," says Surya.

Gong Yan, director of the PSA, says: "Pei's architecture emerges from his mobility across diverse cultures. Rather than being overwhelmed by nostalgia, dislocation, and alienation, these experiences shaped his unique philosophy on life and his distinctive approach to meeting the diverse needs of his clients."

"Humility, pragmatism, wisdom, and generosity define his life spirit and the cultural essence of his architecture," Gong says.

Making the unfamiliar accessible to all

American scriptwriter reveals his keys to writing all-Asian cast hit movie, **Xu Fan** reports.

As Peter Chiarelli walked into the theater in casual attire, his black-framed glasses lent him an unassuming appearance that contrasted with the words “crazy”, “rich”, and “Asian” — the title of the 2018 blockbuster movie adapted from the best-selling book by Singapore-born American novelist Kevin Kwan — the screenwriter cowrote with Malaysian author Adele Lim.

As Hollywood's first major studio release with an all-Asian cast in 25 years, the film was a huge success, both commercially and culturally. The romantic comedy, made on a \$30 million budget, grossed \$239 million worldwide, and is widely regarded as a milestone in breaking Hollywood stereotypes about Asian men, thanks to its well-educated, attractive male lead.

It won multiple honors, including two Golden Globe nominations, and is the story of Rachel Chu, a Chinese American economics professor at New York University, who travels to Singapore with her boyfriend Nick Young, to attend his best friend's wedding, only to discover that her university history professor boyfriend comes from one of the most wealthy and prominent families in Asia.

While recently attending the second Macao International Comedy Festival, Chiarelli, whose film industry career spans over two decades, reflected on his involvement in an interview with China Daily.

Describing himself as somebody who was “very ignorant about Singapore and its culture”, Chiarelli, an American, was captivated by Kwan's story, and set out to explore it in detail.

To help the Washington native better understand Singapore, a place depicted in the book as a playground for the super-rich, the producers arranged for him to meet residents of the island country.

“They introduced me to residents of different neighborhoods in Singapore. I spoke to a lot of people over two weeks, meeting about two people a day — one in the morning, one in the afternoon,” Chiarelli says of his intense schedule.

Thanks to their insights, he developed a deeper understanding of Singaporean culture, which helped him refine small but meaningful details — such as choosing the East Coast Lagoon Food Village, a beachside hawker center, as a location for a casual outing in the film.

“What I found interesting about Singapore is that it's an incredible melting pot. It isn't very big, but you have Chinese, Malay, Filipino, Indian — all these cultures living



A still from the Hollywood blockbuster *Crazy Rich Asians* features Michelle Yeoh as Eleanor Young, the matriarch of one of Singapore's wealthiest families. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: A scene from the film featuring main characters, Rachel Chu and Nick Young, played by Constance Wu and Henry Golding, respectively. Right: Lisa Lu plays the grandmother of the Young family.



together in one place. You'll find an Indian hawker stall with Malay and Chinese food stalls right next to each other. That's one of the things I love most about Singapore — how it's this wonderful blend of people,” he says.

While the lavish lifestyles — exemplified by the opening scene, in which a tycoon's wife buys a luxury hotel after being prevented by

snooty receptionists from checking in to her reserved suite because she turns up rain-soaked — were among the film's most captivating moments, Chiarelli says he discovered something more meaningful through the writing process.

“The film feels like a dream world, one you can enter even if you can't live it in real life. Though it's like an invitation into the super-

rich world ... what interested me the most was the idea of how similar everyone is, money or no money. Money lets you do fun things, like ride private jets, but at their core, people are people. That's something I really believe in, and I think it's one of the reasons I keep coming back to writing about these things.”

For a Chinese audience, the film's most familiar face was Michelle

Yeoh, the first Asian woman to win an Academy Award in 2023 for Best Actress for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. In the film, she plays Eleanor Young, Nick's strict, intimidating mother.

Chiarelli is full of praise for Yeoh. “She's a force of nature. You can't take your eyes off her. In real life, she's the warmest, most loving, kind person.”



A poster of the film.



Peter Chiarelli, the screenwriter, attends the second Macao International Comedy Festival in April.

When asked about the key to writing a successful comedy, Chiarelli — who is also known for blockbusters like *Now You See Me 2* — explains one of the challenges he faced. “It's funny — when I was writing, I wanted as many people as possible to enjoy the film. Some phrases were funny in English but not in Chinese, or they might even be offensive in Chinese.”

So he imagined writing the film for his aunt — a person who knows little about Singapore — and set the simple goal of making her laugh, an approach he says gave him confidence that the script would resonate with other international moviegoers, too.

Contact the writer at aufan@chinadaily.com.cn



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Scan the code to watch the video.

Shining a light on the young filmmakers of tomorrow

By LI YINGXUE
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From the Lumiere brothers' first screening of *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* in a Paris cafe on Jan 25, 1896, to today's ever-evolving cinematic landscape, debut films have remained the beating heart of innovation in cinema.

These first-time directorial efforts, often raw and fearless, embody the passion and ambition of emerging storytellers. Last Saturday evening, this spirit was vividly celebrated at the 32nd College Student Film Festival's Youth Night honors ceremony.

Broadcast live on Beijing Satellite TV, Beijing Time, and Tencent Video, the ceremony was held at the Beijing Comedy Theater and brought together leading figures from the film industry, scholars, and a vibrant community of young film enthusiasts.

Among the night's most anticipated announcements was Most Popular Debut Film of the Year, an accolade voted for by university students across the country. When the winner was finally revealed, *Gone With the Boat* emerged as the standout, claiming the coveted title. The film impressed both viewers and critics with its innovative narrative style and compassionate portrayal of family bonds, marking director Chen Xiaoyu as a promising new voice in Chinese cinema.



Left: Ge You (second from left) receives the Most Popular Actor of the Year award voted by college students. Middle: Zhuang Dafei (center) performs a musical at the award ceremony. Right: The 32nd College Student Film Festival's Youth Night was held in Beijing last Saturday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Gone With the Boat is the deeply emotional story of an elderly woman diagnosed with a brain tumor. As her adult children clash over how best to care for her, they eventually return to their hometown to accompany her through her final days.

The story is rooted in personal experience — Chen said that the character of the elderly woman was inspired by his own grandmother.

“I was raised by my grandmother in Xinqiao village, a water town along the Grand Canal in Jiangnan (the region south of the Yangtze River),” he said. “This film is my way of remembering her and the

home that shaped me.”

The project was a labor of love, beginning in 2019 and evolving over six years and 32 drafts before achieving its final form.

Made on a modest budget of under 2 million yuan (\$276,800), the film debuted in April last year and quickly began earning accolades, including Best Screenwriter at the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival's Asian New Talent section of Golden Goblet Awards, and Best New Director at the 10th Silk Road International Film Festival.

Actress Tian Hairong, who presented the award, reflected on the significance of debut films. “Every

directorial debut is both a proving ground for ambition and a birthplace of talent. These works are more than just introductions — they are seeds, planted with the resolve to grow and the passion to speak through light and shadow.”

Chen acknowledged the honor with heartfelt gratitude, thanking his entire crew and singling out late Tibetan director Pema Tsenden for his guidance and encouragement.

“His mentorship means the world to me,” said Chen. “I see *Gone With the Boat* as just the beginning. Like those before me, I'll continue to defend my creative path with natural language and instinctive passion.”

As part of the Beijing International Film Festival, the College Student Film Festival is a platform for emerging filmmakers from universities in China and abroad, and celebrates student-driven creativity and original storytelling.

This year's festival saw enthusiastic participation from over 100 domestic and international universities. More than 3,000 entries were submitted — including scripts, films, and critiques — culminating in 152 award-winning entries.

In addition to *Gone With the Boat*, several other honors were given out during the ceremony. The Most Popular Film of the Year award went to *Her Story*, while Ge

You won Most Popular Actor for his performance in *The Hedgehog*, the fifth time the veteran actor has received the title. Yong Mei and Zhang Zifeng shared the Most Popular Actress award, which celebrates both experience and emerging talent.

As Chinese cinema evolves, festivals like the College Student Film Festival highlight the power of fresh perspectives. Debut films continue to drive the industry forward, infusing new life into storytelling.

Through work like *Gone With the Boat*, the next generation of filmmakers isn't just ready — they're already shaping the future.

Sanctuary of science

Station turns pioneering carbon research into climate solutions
GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



Exhibition brings to life mythical world of Wukong
LIFE, PAGE 15



Catalyst for commerce
Canton Fair channels buyer demand to local suppliers
BUSINESS, PAGE 8

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025

China-CELAC Forum to send unity message

Xi to deliver speech, propose initiatives for Latin American and Caribbean countries

By ZHAO JIA
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President Xi Jinping will attend and deliver a speech at the opening ceremony on Tuesday of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum, a gathering that is expected to send a message of unity and cooperation from both sides to jointly address global challenges.

Foreign ministers or representatives from Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as heads of relevant regional organizations, will attend the meeting.

Xi will review the development of China-LAC relations and propose new initiatives in his speech, and he will also host a luncheon for guests from Latin American and Caribbean countries, Assistant Foreign Minister Miao Deyu said at a news briefing on Sunday.

Two key documents are expected to be adopted at the meeting — one is a Beijing declaration to reaffirm both sides' commitment to peace, development and cooperation, while the other is a joint action plan outlining specific initiatives in areas such as technology, trade, investment, infrastructure and Belt and Road cooperation.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the China-CELAC Forum, the first multilateral platform that includes China and all 33 independent countries in the region. Miao said it represents a significant milestone in China-LAC cooperation.

Since 2013, Xi has visited Latin America and the Caribbean six times and has frequently met with leaders in the region through bilateral and multilateral engagements, leading the China-LAC relations to a new stage that features equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and benefits for the people.

To date, three ministerial-level meetings and over 100 subforums covering 31 fields have been held within the framework of the forum.

"China views Latin America and the Caribbean as vital parts of the Global South and significant forces for upholding world peace and development, endowed with vast development potential and a promising future," Miao said at the briefing.

"Despite the geographic distance, the friendship between

China views Latin America and the Caribbean as vital parts of the Global South and significant forces for upholding world peace and development, endowed with vast development potential and a promising future."

Miao Deyu, China's assistant foreign minister

both peoples runs deep. China has always approached the relationship from a strategic and long-term perspective," he added.

As global attention once again turns to China-LAC relations, Miao reiterated China's policy stance, saying that equality is the defining feature of the relationship, and mutual respect and equal treatment have enabled both sides to chart a path of state-to-state cooperation.

He emphasized that LAC countries are not anyone's "backyard".

"What the people of Latin America and the Caribbean seek are independence and self-determination, not the so-called 'new Monroe Doctrine,'" he said.

Miao also underscored that China-LAC cooperation is a model of South-South collaboration, free of geopolitical games, exclusive blocs and zero-sum thinking.

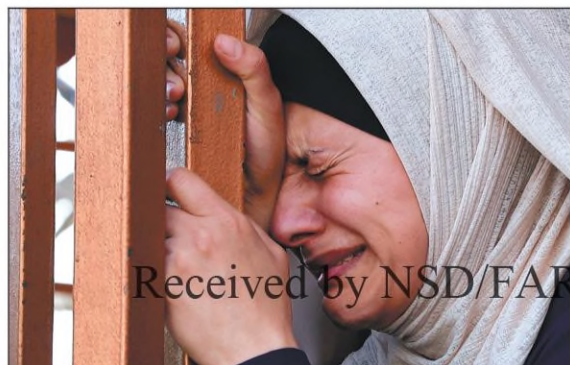
Cui Shoujun, founder and director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Renmin University of China, said the development of China-LAC relations neither targets any third party nor is influenced by third parties, and that LAC countries have demonstrated growing enthusiasm for cooperation with China.

The two sides now enjoy strong economic and trade complementarity and vast cooperation potential in critical minerals, infrastructure, industrial and supply chains, renewable energy and high-tech sectors, Cui added.

Over 20 countries in the region have joined the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

See Forum, page 3

No end to tears



A woman cries during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Sunday at Nasser hospital in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis. The latest airstrikes killed mostly women and children. HATEM KHALED / REUTERS

See story, page 7

Head-of-state guidance key to steady Sino-Russian ties

By MO JINGXI
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President Xi Jinping returned to Beijing on Saturday, wrapping up a four-day state visit to Russia that sent a strong message that the China-Russia relationship is rock solid, the victorious outcome of World War II cannot be challenged, and the world needs justice instead of hegemonism.

In Moscow, Xi attended nearly 20 bilateral and multilateral events, including celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War.

Speaking at a media briefing upon the conclusion of the tour, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that Xi's visit, which took place amid a complex and turbulent international landscape, reflected on history, looked to the future, carried forward friendship and upheld justice, adding that the trip was a complete success.

The head-of-state guidance has served as the fundamental guarantee for the sustained and steady growth of China-Russia relations. Since 2013, Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin have met over 40

times, fostering profound mutual trust and sincere friendship.

From the welcoming ceremony to bilateral talks and a chat over tea, the two leaders engaged in in-depth discussions for nearly 10 hours on issues of common concern, according to Wang.

The most important political outcome of the visit was the signing of a joint statement on further deepening the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, Wang said, noting that this document has provided the strategic guidance for the development of bilateral ties in the next stage.

In the statement, the Chinese version of which comprises over 10,000 characters, the two sides agreed that China-Russia ties have set an example for building a new type of international relations and become a model for cooperation between major countries and the largest neighbors in the world.

Facing the intertwined international situation of change and turbulence, China and Russia will maintain strategic resolve, always regard each other as priority cooper-

ation partners, and jointly resist any attempts to interfere with or disrupt the traditional friendship and deep mutual trust between the two nations, the statement said.

The two sides will comprehensively deepen practical cooperation in various fields and ensure that bilateral cooperation achieves quality upgrade before 2030, it added.

Foreign Minister Wang said that Xi's attendance at the May 9 Victory Day celebrations once again demonstrated China's commitment to working with other countries to uphold a correct historical perspective on WWII and jointly safeguard the postwar international order.

During his visit, Xi emphasized that China and Russia, as two main theaters of action during WWII, made a decisive contribution to the victory over fascism and thus laid the cornerstone of the postwar international order.

China and Russia should stand unwaveringly side by side and resolutely uphold the United Nations-centered system of international relations and the international order underpinned by international law, Xi said.

Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said the victory in WWII was achieved because the international community had overcome differences in values and ideology, transcended national borders and racial distinctions, and ultimately defeated the fascist powers through unity and cooperation.

"Therefore, we emphasize the need to uphold a correct historical perspective on WWII, not only to reflect on the past, but also to prevent any attempt to distort the historical truth of WWII or deny its victorious outcome," she said.

Su added that the distortion of the historical truth of WWII not only undermines the postwar international order, but also deliberately defames the historic contributions of China and Russia. "This could have a negative impact on the changes in the future global landscape."

Inside

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Welcoming peace



Residents of Multan in Pakistan celebrate on Saturday after Pakistan and India announced that they had agreed on a ceasefire to end the latest outbreak of fighting between the two sides with immediate effect. The announcement followed four days of intense drone volleys and missile strikes on each other. The truce appeared to be holding on Sunday despite charges of violations by both sides. MANSOOR / XINHUA

See story, page 3; Editorial, page 11

US politicians need lesson in whole-process democracy

WORLD WATCH
By Anthony Moretti

many politicians; simply put, they fear the backlash they might receive from supporters and critics should they make such a visit.

Thus, ignorance continues to dominate. The absence of personal experience combined with the need to maintain the negative narrative about China leads to the immediate use of talking points centered around China as a determined enemy of the United States that wants to undermine the global order. US citizens should demand better from the men and women they choose to represent them. Sadly, too few do.

At the risk of oversimplification, at its core, China's whole-process people's democracy is based on whether government officials and policies are improving the lives of the Chinese people.

Beginning at the grassroots level, locally elected officials must understand the needs of their areas because what is taking place there might serve as a relevant example for conversations at the national level. As policy decisions continue to be made, committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference offer input on potential plans.

See Democracy, page 3

NEW GLOBAL MARKETS, SALES METHODS EMERGE FROM SMOKE OF TARIFF WAR

With duties having varying impacts, Chinese exporters seek alternatives

By CANG WEI in Nanjing, HE CHUN in Changsha, and QI XIN in Zhengzhou

In-depth

Amid the roar of machinery at a motorcycle factory in Luoyang, Henan province, hundreds of wooden crates marked with delivery details of customers in Europe, Africa and Asia are loaded onto trucks.

Produced by Luoyang Northern Ek Chor Motorcycle Co, Dayang brand motorcycles are popular both at home and overseas.

Last year, over 200,000 motorcycles and three-wheelers were shipped from the factory to destinations around the world.

Li, deputy director of the company's overseas marketing

department, said that although the United States is not one of the company's main export markets, business is still affected by the ongoing uncertainty over US tariff policies.

"In the first quarter of this year, our company's exports grew by over 20 percent compared with last year. The impact of the tariff war may lead to a slight decline in growth in the second quarter," said Li.

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Vol.7 - No. 1576

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Asia Pacific: Thailand 120
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;
Japan 210yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee



PAGE TWO

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Exporters: Adapting, navigating to thrive



Staff members sort out and pack shoes at a logistics station of the Desai Group on April 20 in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. The shoe manufacturing company has been engaged in trade for decades. LIU JILI / XINHUA

From page 1

However, he added that as long as the company is sincere with its customers and dedicated to producing quality products, there is the potential to broaden global markets.

In recent years, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations members have collectively surpassed the US to become Henan's largest trading partner, according to statistics from Zhengzhou Customs.

The province has also seen steady growth in imports and exports with countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative along with emerging overseas markets under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

When the US imposed an initial increase of 34 percent on Chinese products in the first round of tariffs, customers in the US factored in adjustments to retail prices, Li said. Although many US consumers have a special liking for three-wheel motorcycles, increased prices due to the tariffs will inevitably reduce sales, he said.

"It also compels us to delve deeper into the path of comprehensive internationalization," Li said.

Considering the unpredictable duration and cycles of the tariff war, the company's priority now is to explore niche markets, expand its domestic and international markets, and build a larger customer base, he said.

The motorcycle manufacturer is also considering collaborating with overseas companies to establish local operations.

"For example, in Mexico, if we assemble locally, according to previous policies, we could save 10 percent on tariffs," Li said.

Quality matters

The US tariffs have brought significant uncertainty to foreign trade enterprises, with many companies facing increasing pressure to take proactive measures to address the situation.

Deng Lin, chairman of Liling Caifeng Fireworks Co, in Zhuzhou, Hunan province, acknowledged the immediate challenges posed by the "unstable" US tariff rates, which have disrupted new orders and slowed production.

"Our products, aside from being sold domestically, have the United States as a primary export market," he said.

Deng said clients are pausing orders to negotiate with the US government on the tariffs.

He added the company is currently expanding its presence in the domestic market, while exploring opportunities in other markets including Europe and Southeast Asia.

Deng participated in the 19th International Symposium on Fireworks and the

First Hunan (Liling) Fireworks Industry Expo on April 21 in Zhuzhou, hoping to cultivate new clients.

Hunan exported 4.84 billion yuan (\$666 million) of fireworks and firecrackers last year, accounting for 58.6 percent of the country's total fireworks exports, according to Changsha Customs.

The US remains the biggest fireworks export market for the province, with 1.7 billion yuan of the product exported to the country in 2024, marking a year-on-year increase of 28.1 percent.

During the expo, fireworks manufacturers said the superior quality and variety of Chinese products had helped them maintain a competitive edge that can see them withstand the impact of the new tariffs.

Li Yanping, Chairman of Hunan Hengda Fireworks, said the fireworks sector remains relatively confident about overcoming the US tariffs. When everything is settled, global consumers will still purchase Chinese products, she said.

"People won't stop celebrating with fireworks. Fireworks symbolize resilience and joy — a universal human need," she said.

Benefits of diversification

Wuxi Rapid Scaffolding (Engineering) Co is a national high-tech enterprise specializing in the research, development, production, sales, design, and leasing of various scaffolding products.

In 2024, the company, headquartered in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, achieved sales revenue of 380 million yuan.

Sun Ziling, head of its marketing department, said North America accounts for about 15 percent of the company's total business.

"The current impact is relatively minor. Whether there is a need to abandon the North American market and shift our focus to domestic market, we need to wait until the specific tariff collection begins (to see)," she said.

In addition to the domestic market, the company's business extends to over 80 countries and regions, with subsidiaries in Singapore, Malaysia, and Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

"Since the beginning of this year, our sales in Southeast Asia have increased by approximately 10 percent year-on-year, and sales in Russia have increased by about 35 percent year-on-year," said Sun.

Apart from leveraging mature cross-border e-commerce platforms like Alibaba.com and 1688, the company has started building its presence on overseas social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Through content marketing to build brand trust, the company has attracted the attention of many overseas consumers.

"This approach allows us to maintain traditional foreign trade efficiency while also

using the flexibility of a direct-to-consumer model," said Sun.

As the tariff hikes start to bite in the US, more customers there are starting to pay attention directly to Chinese suppliers.

Chinese cross-border business-to-business e-commerce app DHgate recently secured second spot in downloads on the Apple App Store in the US, just behind OpenAI's ChatGPT.

Taobao, the online marketplace owned by tech heavyweight Alibaba Group, has surged to the top of the Apple App Store's downloads in 16 countries, and is among the top 10 in 123 countries.

Experts said the increased overseas traction of Chinese e-commerce platforms demonstrates China's strong capabilities in manufacturing. Chinese products have gained an upper hand in terms of cost and price compared with their counterparts around the world, they said.

In the first quarter of this year, the volume of cross-border e-commerce goods exported from the international airport in Dalian, Liaoning province, has seen a significant increase in small items, according to Dalian Customs.

These items include fishing gear, storage boxes, and stationery, along with traditional exports such as clothing and mechanical parts.

Cao Rui, president of Made-in-China.com, noted some Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms have gained significant popularity in North America, with consumers flocking to these online marketplaces to buy products directly from Chinese suppliers. "It proves that the demand has not decreased, rather, orders have been redirected," she said.



A foreign trader inspects a Dayang motorcycle at the 137th China Import and Export Fair. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and Portuguese-speaking markets, indicating significant potential for growth.

To help businesses adapt to market changes, platforms like Made-in-China.com have been implementing various measures to enhance sales.

"We have introduced services in 16 different languages, with smaller language markets now accounting for one-third of the website's visitor volume," Cao stated.

The platform will continue to enhance the language service capabilities of its AI tools to help Chinese enterprises overcome language and cultural barriers and tap into the potential of these markets.

Data from the platform indicates that light industrial products have been significantly impacted by tariff barriers, Cao said. The hardest hit companies are those whose US exports account for more than half of their total exports.

While most foreign trade enterprises are inclined to explore new international markets, a large number of them have also started shifting their focus to the domestic market, said Cao.

"Emerging markets pose certain risks due to less mature purchasing power and commercial credit compared to European and American markets ... companies need to adapt to the rules and risks of new markets and get accustomed to new trade models," she said.

To assist struggling businesses, Made-in-China.com has established a 150 million yuan special development fund for the light industry sector. The fund focuses on supporting industries such as consumer electronics, clothing and textiles, toys, and office supplies.

The special development fund will be used to extend the promotional service period for new platform entrants. Online promotion efforts in the light industry sector will also be boosted to provide more opportunities for foreign trade enterprises to accumulate visitor volume and expand business opportunities.

The platform will organize online activities for high-growth markets such as the Middle East, South America, and East Asia, conduct offline exhibitions and events, and leverage social media to facilitate supplier-buyer connections.

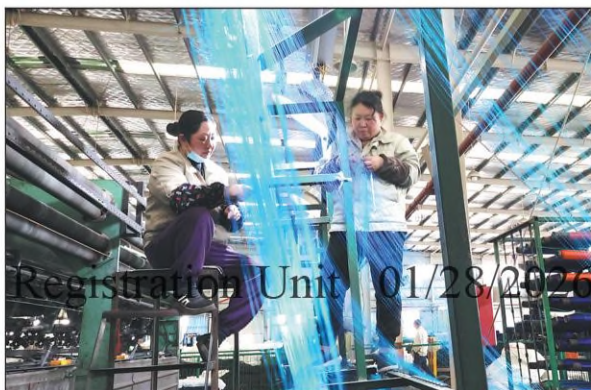
Cao believes that businesses still have an optimistic outlook on the development of new markets. "The potential demand in international markets is enormous, and as long as the demand exists, Chinese enterprises will play a crucial role in the global supply chain."

Zhang Xiaomin and Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn



Left: Foreign traders learn about products of Liling Caifeng Fireworks Co during the 19th International Fireworks Symposium in Liling, Hunan province, in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Middle: Employees work on an urgent trade order for safety protection nets at a factory in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, on March 25. LIANG XIAOPENG / XINHUA



Right: A textile company worker makes fabric products for export in Qingdao, Shandong province. LIANG XIAOPENG / XINHUA

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TOP NEWS

Nations vow to uphold intl fairness, justice

President Xi meets with leaders of Serbia, Myanmar, Cuba, Venezuela and Slovakia

By ZHOU JIN
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Broad consensus on mutual support for defending multilateralism and resisting power politics and bullying has been reached in President Xi Jinping's extensive contacts with a number of world leaders on the sidelines of celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War.

The Chinese president held a series of bilateral talks on Friday in Moscow with political leaders from Serbia, Myanmar, Cuba, Venezuela and Slovakia. During the meetings, the leaders pledged to jointly uphold international fairness and justice, as well as the common interests of the international community.

When meeting with Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing, Xi emphasized that China supports Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national stability, and in steadily advancing its domestic political agenda.

Xi also said he hopes Myanmar will take effective measures to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals, institutions and projects in the country, and make greater efforts to combat transnational crimes such as online gambling and telecommunications fraud.

In separate talks with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, Xi pointed out that the Latin American and Caribbean states are sovereign and independent nations, not anyone's backyard.

China firmly supports Cuba in safeguarding its national sovereignty and opposing foreign interference and blockade, Xi told Diaz-Canel.

He also expressed willingness to set China-Cuba relations as an example of unity and cooperation among socialist countries, as well as of sincere mutual assistance among developing nations.

During his meeting with Maduro, Xi said that China stands ready to strengthen exchanges on governance experience with Venezuela and continue to deepen bilateral pragmatic cooperation in various fields.

Diaz-Canel and Maduro spoke highly of Xi's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind as well as the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative. They also said they are ready to work with China in opposing unilateralism and protectionism.

Xi emphasized in his talks with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico that China would like to follow the historical trend of openness, cooperation and mutual benefit, strengthen strategic communication and advance the relationship between China and Europe.

Xi told Vucic that Beijing would like to work with Serbia to strengthen cooperation in trade and investment, continue supporting the construction and operation of relevant projects, give full play to their demonstrative effect, and achieve more outcomes that deliver mutual benefits and win-win results.

When meeting with Fico, Xi called on China and Slovakia to jointly advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and promote steady and long-lasting bilateral relations and China-European Union ties. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of China-EU diplomatic relations.

China welcomes Slovakia's participation as the guest country of honor at the fourth China-Central and Eastern European Countries Expo & International Consumer Goods Fair, which will be held later this month, Xi said, adding that China is also pleased to see more of its enterprises investing and doing business in Slovakia.

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People gather near the wreckage of a bus on Sunday following an accident near the town of Kotmale in a mountainous area of Central Sri Lanka. The bus plunged into a ravine after skidding off a cliff, causing at least 21 deaths and numerous injuries. The bus was carrying 50 passengers, mostly Buddhist pilgrims. AFP

Democracy: People make key policy decisions

From page 1

Eventually, choices are shared with Party members, who are then tasked with relaying the needs of the people to the highest authorities.

The CPC has the responsibility to ensure that public sentiment is understood and followed. Their activities are most notable at the annual National People's Congress, which typically takes place in March.

Is it working? Harvard University reports that year-on-year sampling data it has collected show that "satisfaction with government has increased across the board. From the impact of broad national policies to the conduct of local town officials, Chinese citizens rate the government as more capable and effective than ever before."

In 2024, the Pew Research Center asked citizens of 24 "recognized democracies" around the world whether the electoral system they had was a good way to govern their country. Overall, 20 percent suggested it was a bad option. The five countries with the highest negative numbers are South Africa (32 percent), Brazil (28 percent), Argentina and Kenya (24 percent) and then the US (23 percent, and tied with other countries).

The CPC has the responsibility to ensure that public sentiment is understood and followed. Member activities are most notable at the annual National People's Congress.

Is it fair to call whole-process people's democracy more complex than the West's definition of democracy? Probably. Part of the reason is that the execution of any one election is not a barometer of success. Related to this, lengthy campaign seasons in which the so-called race to the bottom, defined by a barrage of negativity about an opponent, do not exist. And, yes, the competition between parties that defines political life in the West is absent in China.

Chinese officials regularly note that whole-process people's democracy involves the Communist Party of China as the leading authority across the country, with the people making critical decisions regarding policies and the law forming the foundation for stability. Perhaps in the near future, more and more US citizens will want to ask more and more of their elected officials whether they have toured China and can attest to the veracity of that statement. And the results that should flow from it.

The author is an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of Robert Morris University or China Daily.

Tense calm after ceasefire between India and Pakistan

A fragile truce appeared to be holding between India and Pakistan following the declaration of a ceasefire on Saturday to end the latest flare-up between the two neighbors, as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate phone talks with Pakistani and Indian officials to extend support for an early end to hostilities.

The two countries had been involved in intense fighting for four days, the worst violence in nearly three decades, with missiles, drones and artillery fire being directed at each other's military installations. Around 70 people were killed in the fighting.

A ceasefire agreement was reached on Saturday between the two sides, but within hours, artillery fire was reported from India-controlled Kashmir.

Blasts from air-defense systems were heard in cities under blackout near the border, according to authorities, residents and Reuters witnesses.

Late on Saturday, India said that Pakistan had violated the understanding arrived at to stop firing and that the Indian armed forces had been instructed to "deal strongly" with any repetition.

In response, Pakistan said it was committed to the ceasefire and blamed India for the violations.

By dawn, the fighting and explosions reported overnight had died down on both sides of the border, according to Reuters.

Power was also restored in most of India's border towns after a blackout the previous night.

Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar said on Saturday that Pakistan and India had agreed on a ceasefire with immediate effect.

"Pakistan has always strived for peace and security in the region, without compromising on its sovereignty

and territorial integrity," Dar said.

He said that after the recent escalation and military activities on both sides, several countries, including the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, were in contact with Pakistan.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Saturday that the two countries agreed to observe a ceasefire and end military actions on their borders and the Line of Control.

"Pakistan (Director General of Military Operations) called the DGMO of India at 15:35 local time earlier this afternoon. It was agreed between them that both sides would stop all firing and military action on land, in the air and sea with effect from 17:00 local time today," Misri said at a press briefing in New Delhi.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan.

"The Secretary-General welcomes the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan as a positive step toward ending current hostilities and easing tensions," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN chief, said in a statement.

"He hopes the agreement will contribute to lasting peace and foster an environment conducive to addressing broader, long-standing issues between the two countries," Dujarric said.

Also on Saturday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate phone talks with Pakistani and Indian officials.

During a phone conversation with India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, said China

expects India and Pakistan to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire through consultation, which is in the fundamental interests of the two countries and represents the common aspiration of the international community.

China condemns the terrorist attack in Pahalgam and opposes all forms of terrorism, he said.

During a phone call with Dar, Wang said China hopes for and supports an early ceasefire between Pakistan and India, and is willing to continue playing a constructive role in this regard.

On Wednesday, India launched airstrikes on Pakistani targets to avenge last month's killing of 26 people by gunmen in Pahalgam town, about 89 kilometers east of Srinagar, the summer capital of the Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The situation along the LoC dividing Kashmir had been tense since as Indian and Pakistani troops engaged in exchange of fire.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Left homeless

A family wades through flood waters on Saturday on their way to safety after overnight rains destroyed their home in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. FEISAL OMAR / REUTERS



Forum: China and LAC countries stand united against containment, suppression

From page 1

Under the framework of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, more than 200 infrastructure projects have been implemented, generating over 8 million jobs.

China has long been the region's second-largest trading partner. In 2024, trade volume between China and LAC countries surpassed \$500 billion, a fortyfold increase from the volume recorded in 2000.

To date, China has signed mutu-

al visa exemption agreements with seven countries in the region, while citizens of Brazil, Argentina and Chile are among those who enjoy the benefits of China's 240-hour visa-free transit policy.

China and LAC countries account for one-fifth of the world's landmass, one-fourth of the global population and one-fourth of global GDP, making the combined region among the most dynamic and promising worldwide.

"The trans-Pacific supersized

market of 2 billion people, jointly formed by China and LAC countries, serves as an indestructible bulwark against any containment or suppression, while providing inexhaustible momentum for our shared development and revitalization," Assistant Foreign Minister Miao said.

China is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with LAC countries to safeguard multilateralism and reject unilateralism and economic bullying, he added.

CHINA

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Coastal Qinhuangdao a tourism hot spot for northern neighbors



A red-crowned crane is released into the wild as primary students and volunteers look on at Beidaihe National Wetland Park in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, on Saturday. The event marked the launch of a series of bird appreciation and protection activities during the Beidaihe bird-watching season. A total of 28 national first- and second-level protected birds, including red-crowned cranes, oriental storks, vultures and common kestrels, were released at the event. YANG SHIYAO / XINHUA

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang
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Nestled along the coastline of the Bohai Sea, Qinhuangdao in Hebei province is becoming an increasingly popular destination for Russian tourists, drawn by rich cultural attractions, natural beauty and visitor-friendly policies.

"The golden beaches and warm sunshine here are greatly loved by our Russian tourists," said Oksana Shiukashvili, general manager of a Russian tourism company, during a tourism exchange conference in late April.

"This isn't my first time in Beidaihe," she said. "As time passes, it has only become more beautiful, and we have fallen even more in love with it."

Beidaihe is one of the most renowned scenic areas in Qinhuangdao.

The city boasts a wealth of cultural and tourism resources, including Laolongtou, or Old Dragon's Head, where the Great Wall meets the sea; Shanhaiguan, a historic Great Wall pass; the Aranya Gold Coast, a hub for art and coastal leisure; and Dove Nest Park, a prime spot for viewing the sunrise.

"In recent years, the tourism facilities here have been continuously upgraded. We hope that in the future, our relationship will be closer and our cooperation will be smoother," Shiukashvili said.

Data shows a surge in Russian visitors, with Beidaihe district alone welcoming 24,500 Russian tourists last year. They accounted for nearly 80 percent of the district's total international arrivals, according to the local tourism and culture bureau.

Qinhuangdao's appeal to Russians has been amplified by China's 144-hour visa-free transit policy, which is available to citizens from

54 countries, including Russia.

The policy allows travelers with valid passports and onward tickets to explore the city's coastal charm for up to six days.

It has contributed to a 176 percent year-on-year increase in foreign arrivals during the first half of 2024, according to the local government.

"Even the six-day visa-free policy cannot meet the demands of Russian holidaymakers coming to Beidaihe," said Zhang Hailong, general manager of Qinhuangdao Haizhiyun International Travel Agency.

From January to April this year, the company received more than 280 Russian tourists and businesspeople, an increase of 180 from the same period last year. Among them, 165 were children age 10 to 16, while the rest were adults age 30 to 60, Zhang said.

The most popular destinations for Russian tourists include Dove Nest Park, Jifa ecological agricultural sightseeing garden, wildlife park, the Great Wall and hot springs at the Fishisland Ocean Resort, he said.

"During the peak tourist season from June to September, the presence of Russian tourists can be seen everywhere in Beidaihe — on beaches, in scenic spots and along commercial streets," said Li Weijie, director of the tourism and culture bureau of Beidaihe.

Li said more Russian tourists are choosing the district as their holiday destination.

"In the future, we will continue to enrich tourism offerings and promote the upgrading of tourism services, writing a new chapter in the integrated development of culture and tourism," he said.

Li's vision was echoed during the 2025 China-Russia Tourism Exchange and Promotion Fair held

in Beidaihe on April 25, where representatives from both countries signed strategic partnerships to boost inbound tourism and niche markets such as study tours.

"We have been to some other countries, but this resort destination in Qinhuangdao is truly delightful," said Anastasiia Imamaeva, one of the Russian representatives attending the conference.

"I believe we will visit here again," said another Russian participant, Nadezhda Starovoitova. "This city is beautiful, the people are hospitable, the weather is sunny and the seawater is clear."

She said she visited a wildlife park, which was "huge" and home to many wild animals.

"For us Siberians, wild animals are incredibly beautiful," she said.

Li said: "From summer retreats to cultural exploration, Beidaihe's partnership with Russia continues to evolve. We aim to diversify our offerings, from seaside yoga to heritage tours."

Qinhuangdao also plans to launch international sailing events and marine research centers while advancing its "tourism plus culture plus sports" model.

With golden sands, historical landmarks and forward-thinking policies, the city is focusing on developing its tourism and cultural industry with Russia as a key partner this year.

"I really like the city of Qinhuangdao. As soon as I got off the train, I felt the enthusiasm of the staff and locals. Here, you can see many signs in Russian, which is very friendly to Russian tourists," said Iuliia Verbitskaia, a Russian visitor.

To further enhance services for Russian tourists, the city will improve the convenience of inbound tourism payments and upgrade shopping areas, local officials said.

Elderly patients to get improved clinical care

Guideline calls for increase in dedicated medical facilities for senior citizens

By WANG XIAOYU
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China plans to build more clinics specializing in geriatrics at major hospitals and strengthen their capabilities as part of broader efforts to address the needs of a rapidly aging society, according to a recent guideline released by the National Health Commission.

The updated guideline on the establishment and management of clinics for elderly patients, issued on Thursday, replaces an earlier version from 2019.

It mandates that hospitals in the upper two tiers of the country's three-tier hospital system establish such clinics for elderly patients, which should include outpatient consultation rooms, wards and comprehensive evaluation rooms.

The number of beds for older adults must be no fewer than 20 at tertiary hospitals and at least 10 at secondary hospitals. Each hospital should have one physician and two nurses for every three beds, the guideline said.

Official data shows that the number of people age 60 and older in China reached around 310 million last year, accounting for 22 percent of the total population. That proportion is projected to exceed 30 percent by 2035.

To meet rising demand, the number of clinics for elderly care

at major hospitals has surged from about 1,500 in 2018 to more than 6,800 in 2023.

Wan Zhirong, deputy director of the geriatrics department at Aerospace Center Hospital in Beijing, said elderly patients often face multiple health challenges and complex care needs.

"Data shows that about 75 percent of elderly people in China suffer from two or more chronic conditions simultaneously, including cognitive decline, high blood pressure, diabetes and coronary heart disease," he said. "They also frequently experience problems such as cognitive impairment, Parkinson's disease, frailty, falls and malnutrition."

At his hospital, Wan said annual visits to the department have increased about 20 percent in recent years. In 2023, outpatient visits exceeded 15,000, with people age 80 and older accounting for 45 percent of hospitalized patients.

Wan emphasized the importance of integrating multidisciplinary specialists — especially in neurology, cardiology and rehabilitation medicine — into specialized care.

"Following acute treatment, many elderly patients still require rehabilitation or home-based care," he said. "This makes developing efficient referral systems that link hospitals with communi-

ty clinics and senior care facilities essential."

According to the guideline, these clinics should include professionals in internal medicine, oncology, traditional Chinese medicine, rehabilitation, mental health, nursing, pharmacy and nutrition to offer multidisciplinary services and incorporate traditional therapies.

Related departments should also be equipped with basic resuscitation equipment, including tracheal intubation devices, manual respirators, electrocardiogram monitors and cardiac defibrillators.

The guideline encourages adding support infrastructure such as auxiliary bathing facilities, electric nursing beds, self-transfer devices, enteral nutrition infusion pumps and rehabilitation training equipment.

Wan said his department evaluates hospitalized elderly patients beyond their primary diagnosis, assessing cognitive function, nutritional status and risk of falls. The department also conducts multidisciplinary consultations and collaborates with community hospitals and elder care institutions to ensure patients receive follow-up care after discharge.

"Smart technologies such as remote monitoring and artificial intelligence-assisted assessments will likely be deployed in the future to foster deeper collaboration between hospitals and primary healthcare or senior care providers," he said.

Mainland able to thwart separatist 'Taiwan independence' activities

By ZHANG YI in Shanghai
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The Chinese mainland has the ability to thwart "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and external interference, and is confident in achieving the reunification of the country, said Qiu Kaiming, vice-director of the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office over the weekend.

Qiu made the remarks during a seminar on cross-strait relations held in Shanghai with more than 160 experts and officials from both sides of the Taiwan Strait in attendance.

The two-day event came amid tense cross-strait relations featuring discussions focusing on the advancement of Chinese modernization and the shared well-being of

people from both sides of the Strait. Regarding the tariff war initiated by the United States, Qiu said that China is fully capable of addressing various risks and challenges, and the countermeasures taken by Beijing have received widespread praise from people both at home and abroad, including Taiwan compatriots.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the restoration of Taiwan from Japanese occupation, and Qiu mentioned that back then, under extremely difficult circumstances, the Chinese people fought valiantly to safeguard the core interests of the country, achieving a victory that was both heroic and tear-jerking.

"In the present day, it is even more imperative to not allow any external forces to interfere in the

rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," he said.

Emphasizing that China has the ability to ensure the shared well-being of people on both sides of the Strait, he called on all Taiwan compatriots to recognize where Taiwan's future and their interests lie, and to advance national reunification and rejuvenation alongside their mainland compatriots.

Experts at the seminar said since Lai Ching-te assumed office as Taiwan's leader, he has made increasingly provocative moves seeking separation, undermining peace in the Strait and the well-being of people in Taiwan.

Seminar participants called for efforts to oppose separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence," and to deepen cross-strait exchange and cooperation.

Chinese hospitals bordering Russia see influx of people seeking TCM

By ZHOU HUIYING
and TIAN XUEFEI in Harbin

Traditional Chinese medicine is fueling a growing wave of inbound medical tourism in China's border regions, particularly in cities such as Heihe and Suifenhe in Heilongjiang province.

At the Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital in Heihe, the scent of moxa wafts through the outpatient corridors. Consultation rooms feature traditional Chinese decor, with bilingual signage in Chinese and Russian.

Vladimir Andriushenko, a 56-year-old from Russia's Amur Oblast, found relief from chronic neck and shoulder pain after undergoing massage therapy at the hospital.

"I have suffered from neck and shoulder pain for quite a long time," he said. "When I first experienced traditional Chinese massage, I felt its magical effect."

Andriushenko said he discovered TCM through books and online research and has developed a strong interest in it since his first treatment years ago.

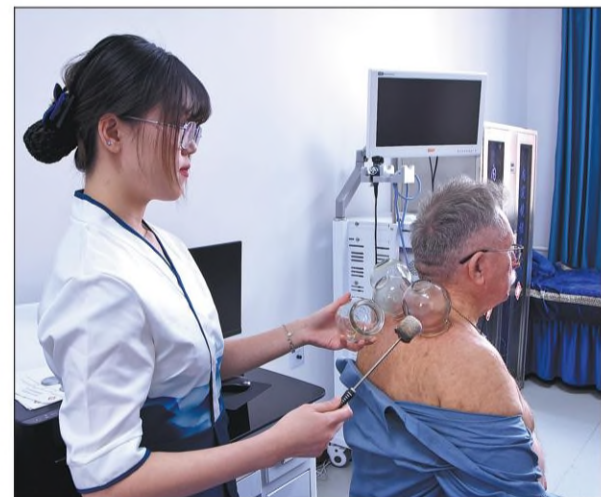
"In many parts of Russia, where it's cold, people often suffer from bone and joint diseases," he said. "In Russia, rehabilitation mainly depends on medical equipment, but TCM therapies such as massage, acupuncture, cupping and herbal tea have become popular because they're gentle and effective."

During his two-day trip to Heihe in April, Andriushenko also bought acupuncture needles and herbal cough medicine.

"Most Russian patients prefer pulse diagnosis and herbal medicine," said Liu Xuesong, director of the hospital. "The revisit rate for conditions such as rheumatism and neck pain is quite high."

"As trust in TCM grows, many patients refer their relatives and friends," he said. "To better serve Russian patients, we established an international medical department last year, trained our staff in Russian and hired professional translators to ensure smooth communication."

In 2024, the hospital provided acupuncture, cupping and other



A medical worker applies cupping treatment to a Russian patient at the Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital in Heihe, Heilongjiang province, earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TCM therapies to more than 600 Russian patients and prescribed over 300 herbal formulas.

The hospital has signed a cooperation agreement with a rehabilitation center in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia, Liu said.

"We plan to send four medical staff members there to help set up a TCM experience hall and offer massage therapy," he said.

Beyond hospital visits, Heihe has also leveraged its natural volcanic magnetic field and cold mineral springs in the Wudalianchi scenic area to attract older Russian visitors.

Last year, the scenic area welcomed 210,000 health tourists, 40 percent of whom were from Russia.

"The cold mineral springs are effective for rheumatism and spinal diseases, which are common among the Russians who visit," said Yuan Xiaobo, head of the scenic area's culture and tourism bureau. "We offer seven- to 14-day health packages combining spring water therapy and TCM — a good fit for short-term medical tourists."

The scenic area has also attracted investment from major companies like Yiling Hospital Management Group to build high-

end therapeutic hospitals, offering personalized care plans and international-standard equipment.

A similar trend is emerging in Suifenhe, another Heilongjiang city on the Russian border.

At the People's Hospital of Suifenhe, signage in Chinese, Russian and English helps guide patients through the facility.

Last year, the hospital treated over 10,000 foreign patients. Since the start of this year, it has served more than 600, mostly from Russia's Far East, according to hospital officials.

"To better serve Russian patients, we've set up a dedicated reception room with traditional Chinese health exercises," said Liu Ximing, director of the national TCM service export base at the hospital. "We've also upgraded our salt therapy room to blend treatment with leisure."

The hospital has established a remote consultation center and an international emergency dispatch center, using an "internet plus medical" model to efficiently meet the healthcare needs of Russian patients.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

Volunteers reopen free canteen for seniors

Charitable effort in small, rural Jiangxi village makes life a lot easier for the elderly locals

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang
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A group of volunteers in Hukou county, Jiangxi province, have chipped in to reopen a village canteen to provide free meals for the local elderly residents.

Chenhetangwan village in the county once had a government-sponsored canteen, but the limited annual budget of 10,000 yuan (\$1,400) made it unfeasible for it to provide free meals to the seniors and so it was forced to close.

The small village of only 400 residents has 60 residents over the age of 65, and the closure of the canteen meant that these people no longer had a cheap and convenient place to eat.

Local Chen Yingpeng saw this and decided to round up a group of volunteers and open a new canteen to feed the elderly.

The canteen, known as the Happiness Canteen, is located next to the village activity center and has the capacity to accommodate over 50 diners at a time.

"I grew up in this village, so I'm familiar with the needs of our senior residents," Chen said. "Many of them are living alone, often without spouses, which makes it difficult for them to cook for themselves at home. So I gathered a group of kind-hearted villagers to raise funds and set up a free canteen."

The canteen receives its primary funding from subsidies provided by local governments and the fundraising endeavors of empathetic individuals.

To improve the management of the canteen, a five-person team was formed. The canteen's expenses are settled weekly to ensure transparency, with estimated annual costs exceeding 100,000 yuan.

The canteen provides free breakfast and lunch, attracting an increasing number of senior diners.

"Almost all the seniors in the village come here to eat. There are more than 50 people here every day," Chen said.



Senior residents make their way to the Happiness Canteen that provides free meals at Chenhetangwan village in Hukou county, Jiangxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: Chefs prepare lunch at the canteen. Seniors enjoy a free lunch at the canteen.



“We believe the canteen is incredibly meaningful, as it brings happiness, health and joy to the seniors in the village while allowing the younger generation working outside to focus on their jobs.”

Chen Zhizhong, fundraiser

The canteen is closed on Sundays and holidays to allow families to spend time together.

With the exception of elderly individuals who have health issues, all residents age 65 and above take turns daily to assist with meal preparation and cleaning. The chefs and assistants are all local residents.

Assistant cook You Qingchun said, “We take turns to work to ensure everyone gets a hot meal.”

Another duty roster member, Chen Hezhi, said: “The senior people gather here happily. If someone misses a meal, we immediately contact and confirm with their family.”

Chen Zhizhong, a philanthropic

individual actively engaged in fundraising for the canteen, said that its presence has created a sense of comfort for both the seniors who dine together and their children who work outside.

“Since the canteen opened, we are all very happy. Many of us from the same village often work away from

home, which can be concerning as our parents remain in the village and are getting older,” he said.

“We believe the canteen is incredibly meaningful, as it brings happiness, health and joy to the seniors in the village while allowing the younger generation working outside to focus on their jobs

with peace of mind.”

Elderly resident Chen Guixi and his wife are among the canteen's frequent customers.

“Since the canteen opened, we go there every day for our meals. There are a lot of options for food and the environment is clean and hygienic, making it a nice place to eat,” Chen said.



A tourist, wearing the traditional clothes of the Yi ethnic group, poses for photos at Dashiban village in Xichang, Sichuan province, on Feb 6. WANG LEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Ancient village revitalized as hot travel destination

By PENG CHAO in Xichang, Sichuan
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Chen Xiaoyu never expected that she could earn an income in her remote inland hometown comparable to what she made in a prosperous coastal city.

Chen, a native of Xichang in Sichuan province, returned to her hometown in 2018 after working for a decade in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. She rented a farmer's house in the city's Dashiban village and transformed it into a boutique homestay.

“My annual income from foreign trade in Guangzhou was around 4 million yuan (\$550,000), and now running the homestay brings in about the same,” she said.

Dashiban is a 600-year-old village located by Qionglai Lake. Once a bustling hub on ancient international trade routes of the Southern Silk Road and the Tea Horse Road, the village gradually declined after maritime transport replaced overland routes as the primary means of global trade.

Villagers relied mainly on farm-

ing and fishing, earning meager incomes. Many left to seek work elsewhere, leaving farmhouses and farmland abandoned.

Xichang launched a rural vitalization demonstration project in Dashiban in January 2021.

The village underwent protective restoration, adhering to the principle of “repairing the old as old” to preserve its historical charm. To attract visitors, the local government upgraded tourism infrastructure, incorporating local cultural elements and traditions to offer immersive experiences.

“The local government's renovation efforts dramatically improved the village's appearance, which has directly boosted my homestay business,” Chen said, adding that her business has expanded to include cultural creativity dining and ticket sales for nearby attractions.

The village's transformation has lured migrant workers back home to start businesses.

“When I first started my business here, there were hardly any young people in the village,” Chen said.

“Now, almost all of them have returned.”

Xiao Wenfang, a Dashiban villager, quit her job in Chengdu, the provincial capital, to open a restaurant with her father in the village after learning about its changes.

“My family sold live fish in the past, now we sell specialty fish dishes,” she said, adding that the tourism boom has fueled her restaurant's business, with annual revenue exceeding 2 million yuan last year.

Yin Jun, Party secretary of Dashiban community, said the village has shifted from traditional farming and fishing to tourism and wellness industries.

Ethnic-themed travel photography has emerged as one of the most popular offerings in the multi-ethnic village, following homestays and restaurants, he said.

“Numerous studios provide a range of Han, Yi, Tibetan, Miao and Lisu ethnic costumes,” Yin said. “On holidays, many tourists gather to adorn themselves in traditional garments, immersing in the rich cultural experience and capturing memories amidst the village's breathtaking scenery.”

Dashiban now has 232 homestays, 85 restaurants and 65 travel photography studios. It received 1.9 million visitors last year, generating 900 million yuan in tourism revenue, he said.

“Tourism has become the village's pillar industry, creating jobs for over 1,000 villagers and increasing per capita income by more than 10,000 yuan in the past four years,” Yin added.

He said the village plans to build a 13.3-hectare “seed paradise” on its outskirts to offer visitors more agri-tourism experiences.

Dashiban has also become a hot spot for senior travelers seeking extended stays. Beijing native Liu Meiqing, who began traveling after retirement, came to experience the village after hearing about it. “The environment here is wonderful. I don't ever want to leave,” she said.

University welcomes first batch of Pakistani trainees

By QIN FENG in Xi'an and PENG CHAO

Northwest A&F University has welcomed its first batch of several hundred trainees under a Sino-Pakistan agricultural program that will send a total of 1,000 Pakistani agriculture graduates to China for advanced training, the university said.

A commitment to Pakistan's Initiative for Capacity Building of 1,000 Agriculture Graduates in China was made between the countries during Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China in June.

The trainees will travel to Shaanxi province in three batches for three months of training at NWAUFU and Yangling Vocational and Technical College, Shaanxi authorities said. The first batch of 292 trainees attended the program's opening ceremony at NWAUFU on April 18.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said in a video speech at the opening ceremony

that China and Pakistan, as large agricultural countries, have strong complementary advantages and vast potential for deepening cooperation in advancing agricultural modernization.

He emphasized that agricultural cooperation is pivotal in advancing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, adding that China will take concrete measures to enhance cooperation with Pakistan in the sector.

Bilal Mahmood Chaudhary, minister and deputy chief of mission at the Pakistani embassy in China, expressed his gratitude for China's efforts in organizing the program. He noted that the combination of China's advanced agricultural technologies with Pakistan's land and labor resources will yield mutual benefits and shared success.

NWAUFU president Wu Pute said the program adopts an innovative model combining theoretical instruction, practical operation, research guidance and cultural exchange.

The curriculum, tailored to Pakistan's agricultural needs, covers areas including livestock breeding and genomics, seed production and processing technology, and livestock disease monitoring and prevention, he said.

In addition to theoretical learning, the participants will conduct research under the guidance of Chinese experts, gain hands-on experience through laboratory work and field practice, and engage in various cultural exchange activities.

“Amid the growing global challenges of climate change and food security, it is crucial to strengthen international agricultural cooperation,” Wu said, adding that NWAUFU will use this program as an opportunity to work with Pakistani partners to explore new pathways and approaches for agricultural development, contributing to global agricultural sustainability.

Muhammad Humayun, a trainee representative, said he was honored and grateful to be part of the initiative, which is aimed at equipping young agriculture professionals with the skills and exposure needed to address the challenges faced by his country's agriculture sector.

“Our group includes students from every corner of Pakistan,” he said. “We are especially inspired by the opportunity to learn from China's successes in agricultural modernization, value addition and rural development.”

He said this training program represents more than just an academic exchange — it is a symbol of friendship and collaboration between Pakistan and China.

“As students, we are here not only to gain knowledge, but to build bridges of mutual understanding, cultural exchange and shared progress,” he added.

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Representatives from China and Pakistan take a group photo at the launch ceremony of Pakistan's Initiative for Capacity Building of 1,000 Agriculture Graduates in China held at Northwest A&F University in Xi'an, Shanxi province, on April 18.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

Editor's note: China Daily's publishing services illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

By YAN DONGJIE in Guangzhou
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Many regions across the globe located along the Tropic of Cancer are arid deserts, yet Dinghu Mountain National Nature Reserve in Zhaoqing, Guangdong province, stands as an ecological outlier with a 98 percent forest coverage rate.

As China's first national nature reserve, this primeval forest — referred to as the "Green Pearl on the Tropic of Cancer Desert Belt" — harbors 2,291 species of higher plants and 277 species of birds, and the groundbreaking scientific achievements made in the reserve have revolutionized global understanding of forest carbon sequestration.

Species gene bank

In the 1920s, a group of botanists, including Chen Huanyong, the first director of the South China Botanical Garden of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, discovered the rich biodiversity of Dinghu Mountain during field research.

They recognized it as a natural species gene bank vital for scientific study, and thus advocated for the preservation of its natural vegetation.

"At that time, scientists represented by Chen realized that the development of the new China must prioritize natural conservation. They were pioneers in establishing nature reserves," said Xia Hanping, director of the Dinghu Mountain reserve's administration bureau.

Thanks to their advocacy, the Dinghu Mountain National Nature Reserve was established in 1956.

From its inception, scientists and forest rangers have worked generation after generation, dedicating themselves to scientific conservation methods to protect and preserve Dinghu Mountain.

"Initially, 82 percent of Dinghu Mountain consisted of non-native forests and even barren hills. Through measures like closing off the mountain for reforestation and precise cultivation, the forest coverage is above 98 percent, and biodiversity has been protected," said Xia, who has worked at Dinghu Mountain for over three years.

"Discovering 17.8 new species per square kilometer is rare among natural reserves nationwide," Xia said. The Dinghu Mountain model has yielded 202 species, with 44 directly named after Dinghu, like the *Didymocarpus dinghushanensis* and *Lysimachia dinghushanensis*.

In 2018, the first footage of a Chinese pangolin was captured in Dinghu Mountain, a species missing for over 30 years, using infrared cameras, further underscoring its unique value as a species gene bank.

Carbon sequestration

Forests are substantial carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide. Scientists estimate forest carbon stocks to assess their crucial role in mitigating global climate change.

In China, there are over 7,800 sample plots used by scientists to



Boats ply a lake in Dinghu Mountain National Nature Reserve in Zhaoqing, Guangdong province, in October 2019. HE RONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Reserve
a scientific
sanctuaryResearch station pioneers
approaches to tackling
climate change

A pond in Dinghu Mountain reserve attracts tourists in May 2020. LI ZHIHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



Top: Clouds and sunlight create light and shade in Dinghu Mountain reserve. WU YONGQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY. Above: Visitors admire a waterfall in Dinghu Mountain reserve in May last year. LIU CHUNLIN / XINHUA



A silver pheasant wanders Dinghu Mountain reserve in April. SUN ZIFA / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

estimate forest carbon stocks. The Dinghushan Forest Ecosystem Research Station was established by the CAS in 1978. In 1999, it became one of the first national field scientific observation pilot stations, making it a key site for China's forest carbon stock evaluation.

"Since the industrial revolution, human activities have dramatically increased atmospheric CO2 concentration, leading to global warming and other crises. Yet, unexplained unknown carbon sinks exist in the carbon cycle," explained Liu Juxiu, director of the Dinghushan station.

With the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, understanding carbon sources and sinks became crucial not only for ecological science but also for international politics and economics, affecting emission reduction responsibilities and sustainable development paths, Liu added.

"Over the past two decades, the Dinghushan station has focused extensively on the structure and

function of tropical and subtropical forest ecosystems and their evolution patterns, achieving numerous internationally impactful scientific results," she said. These achievements earned the National Natural

Science Award's second prizes for the years 2008 and 2023.

In 2006, a research paper published in *Science* by the research team caused a global sensation.

The 0-20 centimeter soil layer in a

400-year-old primeval forest in Dinghu Mountain was accumulating organic carbon at a surprising average rate, challenging the traditional "zero carbon sink" notion of mature forests and opening new paths for global carbon cycle research and climate change mitigation.

"Sustained 24-year monitoring data was the key to the breakthrough," Liu said.

The research team systematically analyzed data from 1979 to 2003, proving for the first time the sustained carbon sequestration ability of mature forests.

Based on this discovery, the team proposed a "non-equilibrium theory framework" for ecosystems, significantly influencing global carbon cycle research.

Carbon emission rights have always drawn significant international attention. In global climate negotiations, fair distribution of carbon rights is a core issue.

"A scientific, rigorous and convincing carbon ledger is essential for securing national development

rights in international climate negotiations," Liu said, adding that several research findings from the reserve directly support China's climate diplomacy and dual carbon strategic implementation.

Over the past 20 years, the team has poured much effort into terrestrial ecosystem carbon sequestration research, integrating data from systematic surveys of 14,371 sample plots across China's forests, shrubs, grasslands and farmlands to estimate the country's terrestrial ecosystem carbon stocks and creating a comprehensive map for them.

"Research proves that China's terrestrial ecosystems still have significant carbon sequestration potential," Liu said.

"Estimates based on forest vegetation and surface waters of carbonate rocks indicate that China's terrestrial carbon sequestration capacity has been underestimated by about 50 percent, largely influenced by regional environmental changes. These findings propose different driving mechanisms for terrestrial carbon sequestration, crucial for rebalancing regional and global carbon cycles. This presents both opportunities and challenges," she said.

"To better serve the national dual carbon strategy, we began constructing an integrated observation platform in 2022, including atmospheric flux towers for comprehensive environmental monitoring and data collection from surface, meteorological and satellite imagery, creating a survey-observation-simulation carbon sequestration research system," said Liu. They also plan to build an underground observation well for critical zone research.

Ecological governance

Joining UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" program in 1980, Dinghushan station pioneered the "core zone-buffer zone-experimental zone" management model. "We adhere to complete prohibition in the core zone and balanced scientific research in the experimental zone," Liu said. This graded protection concept has become widespread across national nature reserves.

Dinghushan station's ecological value extends beyond its own region, with flourishing international cooperation. Since the first international collaboration with Illinois State University in 1988, the station has engaged in long-term research with over 20 international scientific institutions, hosting global events like strategic meetings for the International Long-Term Ecological Research Network, becoming a global observatory laboratory.

Under the "Man and the Biosphere" framework, the "forest ecosystem carbon sequestration model" was included in the United Nations climate change assessment report, providing a reference for developing countries in addressing climate crises, making Dinghu Mountain a global benchmark for ecological research.

Shi Yudie contributed to this story.

Educator passes on natural passion to the public

By YAN DONGJIE

For the past decade, Dinghu Mountain National Nature Reserve has played a significant role in China's nature education and popular science, serving nearly 20,000 students and eco-researchers annually.

Researchers at Dinghu Mountain have developed a unique approach to nature education, a result of 12 years of exploration and dedication by cross-disciplinary nature educator Peng Lifang.

In 2013, Peng graduated from Wuhan University and moved to Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for work, spending long hours in a small cell culture room. However, a trip to Dinghu Mountain changed her life trajectory.

"The mountains, water and trees here are beautiful. I felt relaxed, free and healed. I thought to myself, how wonderful it would be to work around here," Peng said.

After returning to Shenzhen, Peng prepared her resume and approached the head of the man-

agement bureau. "He was surprised because most young people prefer the big city life over moving to the mountains," she recalled.

"A nature education position had just become available. I didn't know what nature education was, but it sounded great to work closely with nature," said Peng, who is now head of the science and education department at the reserve's administration bureau.

"From the start, I researched, conducted field studies and talked to others to learn what they were doing, then tried to replicate that," she said.

Over the years, Peng and her team organized fun activities like bird-watching, forest exploration and night tours of the mountain.

However, in 2018, a school's bird-watching event at Dinghu Mountain led Peng to a significant realization.

"A teacher asked, 'What makes your nature education activities different from others?' I was at a loss for words," she said.

This question deeply impacted

her. "I realized Dinghu Mountain is unique because it's affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, with scientists conducting research here daily. I planned to use nature education to introduce children and the public to these scientific studies," she said.

In 2011, the CAS launched a carbon project at Dinghu Mountain, using a mathematical model to calculate a tree's carbon storage by measuring its diameter. This inspired Peng and her team.

"I adapted this carbon project into a nature education activity where kids measure tree diameters to estimate their carbon storage," said Peng.

She recalled a girl finding out her family needed to plant 55 trees with 20 centimeter diameters to achieve carbon neutrality. "Shocked, she stopped asking her mom to drive her to school," Peng said, highlighting the real-world impact of research conducted at Dinghu Mountain.

Peng's vision extended beyond just introducing children to scien-

tific discoveries — she wanted them to participate in ongoing research.

"Scientists conduct phenological monitoring here, so I wondered if we could teach the public to collect basic scientific data," she said.

Peng and her team then created a 4.5-kilometer "Little Scientist Growth Path" and a 1.2-km "Natural Forest Exploration Path", with accompanying student handbooks.

"Our path has 12 themes such as plant phenology, death and rebirth, and natural museums. We guide children and the public to upload photos, measurements and observations through QR codes, providing foundational scientific data for researchers," Peng explained.

"I tell participants they're part of an important scientific project, making them feel like little scientists," she said.

"Over time, the accumulated photos and information help us and researchers understand the vegetation and phenological con-



Students learn about biodiversity while observing moss in Dinghu Mountain National Nature Reserve. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ditions of the area more comprehensively," Peng added.

In 2021, Peng founded the Dinghu Mountain Volunteer Team, attracting nature lovers and environmentalists. The 100-member team includes some exceptional citizen scientists.

"Initially, we learned from others. After years of exploration and innovation, we've gained our own insights and experiences. In March

2023, we published China's first series on nature education for national nature reserves, providing methods and experiences for other educators," she said.

"Nature education has given me a sense of belonging and pride and rekindled my interest and passion for science. I want to excel in this job and pass on this enthusiasm, helping more people fall in love with nature and science," Peng said.

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WORLD

Ruling party of South Korea picks candidate

Former minister wins presidential nomination, ending internal dispute

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
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Former South Korean labor minister Kim Moon-soo registered as the People Power Party's presidential candidate on Sunday, after the ruling party failed to replace him with former prime minister Han Duck-soo.

After completing the registration, Kim said the June 3 presidential election is important as it will choose a president "who must overcome the crisis South Korea is facing and who can make efforts to achieve the people's happiness."

Sunday marked the deadline for candidates to register with the National Election Commission. The campaign period begins on Monday and will last for three weeks.

Kim expressed confidence in his chances, saying he will devote the utmost efforts to make South Korea a greater country, Yonhap News Agency reported.

His registration followed a week-long internal dispute within the People Power Party. Although Kim had won the party primary earlier this month, PPP leadership sought to unify the candidacy with independent contender Han, who had polled higher in opinion surveys.

Despite Kim's objections, the party initiated an unprecedented process to replace its presidential candidate on Saturday. Han joined the PPP in the wee hours of the day, and the head of the PPP election committee announced that Kim's nomination had been canceled.

However, the bid to replace Kim was eventually rejected in an all-party vote on Saturday evening, leading to the reinstatement of his candidacy.

Following the vote, Han said he humbly accepted the result and would support Kim's campaign.

Former president Yoon Suk-yeol said on Sunday that the PPP's presidential nomination race was marked by intense debates and difficulties, but has shown that the party's system remains normal.

Yoon said he has been grateful to the PPP, despite being caught in the turbulent whirlpool of politics following his impeachment. He was set to attend the third hearing of his criminal case over insurrection charges on Monday.

"Now is the time for unity," Yoon said, noting the upcoming election is not merely about a change in administration but about the core of South Korea's system. He also said the PPP faces a strong opposition side.

Meanwhile, Lee Jae-myung, the presidential candidate of the main opposition Democratic Party and a consistent front-runner in opinion polls, registered his candidacy on Saturday.

In a Gallup Korea poll conducted last week, Lee led a three-way race with 52.1 percent of support, ahead of Kim, who received 31.1 percent, and Reform Party candidate Lee Jun-seok, who polled at 6.3 percent, according to South Korea broadcaster KBS World.

Lee Jae-myung's support appears to have strengthened following a political merger on Friday between the Democratic Party and four progressive parties, with the withdrawal of Progressive Party candidate Kim Jae-yeon from the contest.

Legal woes

The former Democratic Party leader is facing several criminal trials related to election law violations and bribery. While some hearings have been postponed until after the election, observers said a conviction could add uncertainty to his term even if he is elected president.

The national council of judges announced on Friday that an extraordinary session will be held on May 26 to allow judges nationwide to discuss the Supreme Court's decision to send Lee's election law violation case back to the appellate court, which had previously acquitted him.

Key focus will be on restoring public trust in the judiciary and preserving judicial independence.

Yoon Yeo-joon, co-chair of the Democratic Party's election committee, said at a meeting on Sunday that the political neutrality of all state agencies is important during the election.

"At a sensitive time, the sense of balance and political neutrality of the judiciary, the administration, the National Election Commission, and the investigation agencies are very important."

ASEAN urged to grow home solar market

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong
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Southeast Asian countries should accelerate their energy transition and boost domestic solar demand to mitigate the potential effect of steep US tariffs on solar panels imported from the region, analysts say.

Boosting domestic renewable energy generation will protect the green technology industry that is being threatened by such tariffs, they said.

Starting June 9, the United States will impose tariffs ranging from about 14 percent to more than 3,400 percent on solar exporters in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The US Commerce Department said last month that imports of solar cells from the four countries "are being dumped into the US market" and are receiving government subsidies.

Putra Adhiguna, managing director of Energy Shift Institute in Jakarta, said, "Replacing a market the size of US will not be easy, but (the solar exporters) will need to try, including boosting domestic solar installation."

The barriers may open up a narrow window of opportunity for other regional countries not targeted by US tariffs, Adhiguna said. However, the opportunity cannot be sustained unless the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can bolster domestic demand, he said.

According to the US nonprofit Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, the US imported 55 gigawatts of solar panels last year, nearly 90 percent of which came from ASEAN members. The region also exported 14 GW of solar cells to US assemblers.

The institute has estimated that robust US demand for solar products could support some increased import costs, but any price increase beyond 250 percent would make most ASEAN imports untenable.

'Real opportunity'

Grant Hauber, the institute's strategic energy finance adviser, said the tariff hikes should encourage ASEAN to diversify its energy sources as domestic markets "represent a real, short-run opportunity" for its green technology sector.

This will also help ASEAN members to meet their decarbonization targets and protect domestic economies from global oil price volatility, Hauber said.

"Renewable energy is a hedge against global market changes because your cost of (installing) renewable energy (in Southeast Asia) is your up-front cost of investment, and that's it. You don't have to (import) fuel."

However, analysts said that beyond boosting consumer demand, ASEAN members need to upgrade their power grid infrastructure to better accommodate

renewable energy generation.

A study published in March by the ASEAN Centre for Energy in Jakarta revealed that ASEAN member states have distinct challenges integrating distributed energy resources, such as rooftop solar photovoltaic systems and battery energy storage, into the grid.

Vietnam, the renewable energy leader in the region on back of its high installed capacity, struggles with transmission congestion, forecast errors and low system inertia, the study said. Thailand also deals with major line tripping and generation trips.

Shabrina Nadhila, an Indonesian analyst for the global energy think tank Ember, said there is growing interest for renewables in the Asia-Pacific region and that Southeast Asian countries can leverage this momentum by diversifying their export destinations.

"The current trade landscape also opens the door for these (solar exporting) countries to regional partnerships within ASEAN and strengthen intra-regional trade," Nadhila said, noting that whether it is renewable or fossil fuels, it is risky for any country to rely on a single energy source.

"Building a diverse and resilient energy system is part of national energy security," she said.

Leonardus Jegho in Jakarta contributed to this story.



Palestinians carry the bodies of those killed in an overnight Israeli airstrike, during their funeral in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, on Sunday. ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP

Israeli airstrike kills 8 in Khan Younis

GAZA CITY — Gaza's civil defense on Sunday reported eight deaths, including four children, in an Israeli airstrike on tents housing displaced people in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Israeli fighter jets targeted three tents housing dozens of displaced people overnight, killing "eight people, including four children aged 2 to 5 and two women", civil defense agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told Agence France-Presse.

The Israeli military, which resumed its offensive in Gaza on March 18 after a two-month truce, did not immediately comment on the strike.

Video filmed by AFP shows rescuers in the dark evacuating bodies by ambulance, one of them in a white plastic body bag while the other was wrapped in a blanket, as well as a wounded baby.

Bassal said the Israeli military also destroyed five houses with explosives in the east of Gaza City, in the territory's north, and fired artillery at the Abassa area east of Khan Younis, without reporting any casualties.

The Gaza Health Ministry said on Saturday that at least 2,701 people have been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza, bringing the overall death toll since the conflict broke out to 52,810.

On Saturday, the armed wing of Hamas released a video showing two Israeli hostages alive in the Gaza Strip, with one of the two men calling for an end to the conflict.

The pair were identified by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum campaign group as Elkana Bohbot and Yosef-Haim Ohana, who were kidnapped during Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack on Israel that triggered the conflict.

The undated three-minute video

footage released by Hamas' Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades shows one of the hostages, 36-year-old Bohbot, visibly weak and lying on the floor wrapped in a blanket.

The second hostage, Ohana, 24, speaks in Hebrew urging the Israeli government to end the conflict in Gaza and secure the release of all remaining captives.

In a statement, Bohbot's family said "Elkana and Yosef are crying out to be saved."

"While all the people of Israel hear their calls, a handful of decision-makers refuse to listen," the family said, echoing criticism of the Israeli government for failing to bring back the hostages.

Water crisis

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Water Authority warned on Saturday that the Gaza Strip is facing a water crisis and "dying of thirst" because of the near-total collapse of water and sanitation services.

Israeli military operations, widespread infrastructure damage, power outages, and restrictions on fuel and essential supplies have brought water services to a near standstill, it said.

The authority reported that 85 percent of water and sanitation facilities in the enclave have been severely damaged, leaving residents with an average of just 3 to 5 liters of water per person per day — well below the World Health Organization's minimum emergency standard of 15 liters.

It also warned of growing public health risks, citing the discharge of untreated wastewater into residential areas and the use of salty, undrinkable water by residents.

The authority accused Israel of violating international humanitarian law and called for an immediate halt to military operations, an end to "systematic occupation practices", the lifting of the blockade, and the protection of water sector workers.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Briefly

OMAN Iran, US hold fourth round of nuclear talks

Iran and the United States began the fourth round of nuclear talks in Oman on Sunday, Iran's ISNA news agency reported, amid a standoff over uranium enrichment. "Enrichment capability is one of the honors and achievements of the Iranian nation," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said before departing to Muscat, adding the issue was "nonnegotiable". However, US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff said on Thursday that Washington's red line is "no enrichment".

JAPAN Ishiba eyes 0% tariff with Washington

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba reiterated on Sunday that he will aim for the elimination of all tariffs in trade negotiations with the United States. "Discussions have gradually come together," he said on Fuji TV. But he said the US agreement with Britain, announced on Thursday, which lowers prohibitive duties on British car exports while keeping a baseline 10 percent tariff in place, was "one model" for deals, "but we should aim for 0 percent tariffs".

SPAIN Chemical plant fire triggers health alert

A fire at a chemical factory in northeastern Spain forced emergency services to issue health warnings to 150,000 residents and stay-indoors orders for five nearby towns, authorities said on Saturday. Health services said medics attended to four people who had reported breathing problems. The fire broke out early on Saturday inside a warehouse, which houses 70 metric tons of chlorine, at the plant near the town of Vilanova i la Geltru, firefighters said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Achieving balance in our lives
01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

As we embrace nature's revitalizing energy, let's also absorb and appreciate the majesty that surrounds us and nurtures our common desire to create an environment for the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

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BUSINESS

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Canton Fair, a pillar for global trade, local suppliers

Biannual event helps businesses stay competitive despite US tariff war

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
qiuquanlin@chinadaily.com.cn

John Leal, founder and CEO of ODM Pacific Ltd, was looking for industrial machines during the 137th China Import and Export Fair that can improve production efficiency for factories in Brazil.

Leal is a regular visitor to the global trade event, popularly known as the Canton Fair. He sees the biannual event, which showcases virtually the entirety of industrial and consumer good categories, as one of the best platforms for global trading.

"I have been visiting more than 10 sessions of the fair — so I have seen a lot of buyers coming here to get new ideas to start new businesses," said Leal, with several badges of the fair hanging around his neck.

"I get one badge coming here each session. I collect them with pride because my life is built around the foreign trade business with Chinese suppliers," he said. The Brazilian businessman also looked for innovative home and furniture products during the fair that are expected to be hot items sold to the overseas market.

"As people's houses are getting more and more expensive worldwide, we are looking for innovative products like home appliances and furniture that can help save space," he said.

Leal meets with his Chinese suppliers every six months. He said the fair allows him to stay connected with his suppliers, adding "it's a great place to continue my business".

Additionally, Leal supported other overseas buyers in selecting products during the fair — not only checking the credibility of suppliers, but also evaluating technical details of the products.

"Because very often the buyers are not in engineering, they don't know how to assess the quality of those products — so I try to help them select the best Chinese suppliers and do some modifications to make their products more suitable for markets overseas," he said.

Leal's company expects to bring innovative products selected during the fair to Brazilian and worldwide customers.

"Actually the current trade war is also a great opportunity for many buyers worldwide. If people can adapt and find a new market, it can be good for both sides like buyers from Brazil and Chinese exporters," he said.

The current turbulence in global trade means that there will be more products available and more latitude to negotiate with Chinese supplier prices, according to Leal.

Chinese factories are less busy with orders, so buyers from new markets have room to negotiate better prices, and the factories have the opportunity to expand their products to new markets such as South America, he said.

"We need to act fast and take advantage of the current uncertain



global trade situation," Leal said. "We have noticed a big increase in demand of industrial machines in Brazil, from last year to this year, because local businesses have been trying to find alternatives to increase margins."

The fair's spring session proved more popular, and emerging markets remained the largest source of overseas buyers for the showpiece, which concluded in early May in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province. The fair, commonly seen as a barometer of China's foreign trade, is held twice a year in spring and in autumn in Guangzhou.

As of May 4, a total of 288,938 overseas buyers from 219 countries and regions were recorded as having attended the global trade event, representing a 17.3 percent increase from the 135th session of the fair, also held in spring last year, according to the organizers.

Of those that attended, a total of 187,450 buyers were from countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, marking a 17.4 percent increase compared to the fair's 135th session and accounting for 64.9 percent of the total.

Buyers from BRICS countries and members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership also increased significantly, showing a growth of 24.1 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively, according to the fair's organizers.

"Brazilian companies all dream about one day importing from China," said Leal, adding nowadays around 30,000 companies in Brazil currently import from China, but stressed the importance of understanding your market and your product.

"It's always important to know where you are going to sell products. If you don't know the market, you don't know the product, then no matter how good the product is,



Top: An overseas purchaser uses a VR device to experience the intelligent cockpit system of a new energy vehicle during the 137th China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 19. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Middle: Visitors take photos of a service robot performance during the 137th Canton Fair on May 5. QIU QUANLIN / CHINA DAILY

Above: A purchaser tries a pair of smart glasses in the household appliances exhibition area during the 137th Canton Fair on April 16. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

you cannot make a successful business," said Leal. He said interest from Brazil was not only confined to industrial machines, but also evi-

dent in consumer and retail oriented businesses like jewelry, clothing or electronics.

"Overseas buyers showed active

interest in placing orders, further boosting companies' confidence in expanding into diversified markets," said Zhou Shanjing, deputy director of the China Foreign Trade Center and head of the fair's media center.

The on-site intention turnover during the fair amounted to \$25.44 billion, marking a 3 percent increase compared with the fair's 135th session.

Transactions with countries participating in the BRI accounted for over 60 percent of total turnover, playing an important role in driving transaction growth, while transactions with traditional markets remained stable, according to Zhou.

"Exhibiting companies commonly reported that products with good quality, strong innovation features and high brand recognition were more favored by overseas buyers," said Zhou.

Deng Guobiao, founder and CEO of cross-border trade payment platform XTransfer, said that trading funds from emerging markets — including the Middle East, Africa and South America — had increased significantly since early this year.

"We will introduce more preferential cross-border payment policies to support Chinese companies to expand their business in emerging markets," said Deng.

Suofeiya Home Collection, which builds custom cabinetries with matching accessories, plans to expand its business in emerging markets, supported by its domestic intelligent manufacturing.

"The strength in intelligent manufacturing, along with strong supply chains, will greatly enable us to deliver products and services more efficiently in overseas markets," said Jiang Hao, general manager of Suofeiya's manufacturing center.

Suofeiya established a fully

intelligent manufacturing factory for custom furniture in 2018, achieving full-process informatization, digitization and intelligence from design to production and installation services.

"This breakthrough addresses common challenges in the custom home industry, such as high labor costs, low production efficiency, long supply cycles and unstable product quality," Jiang said.

The company, based in Guangzhou, has so far established five major intelligent factories nationwide, realizing the large-scale production of all categories of custom clothing, wardrobes, doors and wall cabinets in a one-stop customization process.

"The intelligent workshop has helped lead the industry's transformation from traditional manufacturing to high-tech service-oriented manufacturing," said Jiang.

The company has always been looking for overseas business partners, particularly from emerging markets, to develop its engineering operations and expand its retail channels, according to Jiang.

The company has developed 31 international distributors covering the US, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and the Middle East, providing a one-stop soup to nuts customized solution.

In addition to looking for opportunities in emerging markets, Chinese companies also expect to expand their businesses in the domestic market, by leveraging the robust development of e-commerce.

Guangdong Linkfair Household Co, a joint-stock company established in 2014 in the stainless steel kitchenware and tableware industry, brought livestreaming into the fair's Pazhou Complex, with a bustling crowd of visitors at its booth and enthusiastic discussions with foreign buyers.

"We wanted to make domestic consumers intuitively feel that our products are selling hot globally," said Liang Jianxiu, general manager of the company's domestic marketing department.

In 2025, the company aims to achieve domestic market sales revenue of 400 million yuan (\$55.3 million), more than double the previous year, according to Liang.

Chinese e-commerce platforms like JD and Meituan have also actively strengthened their cooperation with export-oriented enterprises to expand sales in the domestic market.

JD announced a 200 billion yuan "export-to-domestic sales policy" support plan during the fair, establishing a special project team for sales in the domestic market and providing end-to-end support for export-oriented companies.

Meituan, another leading e-commerce platform, held a special matching meeting during the fair, collaborating with over 100 foreign trade enterprises from industries such as seafood, vegetables, fruits, seasonings, snacks and beverages to expand their sales in the domestic market.

In the era of AI, smart tech dismantles language barriers

REPORTER'S LOG

By Qiu Quanlin

Some 22 years ago, I worked part-time as an interpreter, accompanying an Indian businessman visiting the Canton Fair, then a must-attend event for global buyers that only highlighted exports of Chinese companies.

Additionally, I tried to accompany the businessman to visit factories in Dongguan and Foshan, two manufacturing and trade cities in Guangdong province, frequently switching languages between Chinese and English to help him better communicate with his Chinese business partners.

In a time when there were no intelligent translation devices, many college students like myself who majored in foreign languages often worked as translators during the fair, helping facilitate communication between overseas buyers and Chinese exporters.

Things have changed a lot — smart translators have become a boon for overseas buyers and Chinese exporters during the 137th session of the fair, as demands for cross-language communications services have increased.

"After using the artificial intelligence translation device, I have more Chinese friends than Turkish friends," said Cemil Cihan, a Turkish horticultural equipment merchant visiting the fair's first phase themed with advanced manufacturing in mid-April.

Visiting an exhibition booth of Chinese artificial intelligence com-

pany iFlytek, the Turkish businessman bought a dual-screen translation machine as a gift to his friend.

"The AI translation assistant has become one of the important tools for me to talk to Chinese business representatives, helping greatly to enhance business efficiency," he said.

iFlytek's dual-screen translation machine can translate 85 languages online, covering over 200 countries and regions, earning it the position as the designated translation device for the fair, seen as a barometer of China's foreign trade.

The translation device supports offline translation in 17 languages, serving over 800,000 users, with translation instances exceeding one billion, according to the company.

During the fair, I also met Zhang Mingyue, a Chinese businesswoman engaged in selling made-in-Chi-

na goods to overseas markets for more than 20 years.

"In the past, speaking English was enough to solve communication problems in business, but now the environment has changed significantly," said Zhang.

In Zhang's eyes, the foreign trade environment, along with language communications, has changed dramatically as more Chinese goods have been shipped to emerging markets.

"To expand the market to countries and regions in the Middle East, South America and Africa, I hope to communicate directly with customers in their mother tongue from these countries, so as to build trust more effectively," she said.

Over 20 years ago, Zhang, a native of Guangzhou, Guangdong's provincial capital, moved to North America with her family, promoting electrical appliances and lighting

fixtures from Guangdong to overseas markets.

With the changing foreign trade environment, Zhang's goals have become more ambitious — to promote competitive products from Guangdong to more emerging overseas markets.

She did. After years of trading in the North American market, Zhang successfully expanded her business to the Middle East and South America, among other places.

Knowing that only English is no longer enough, Zhang needs to be able to communicate directly with customers speaking in languages such as Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese.

"By using translation devices that can speak the local languages, business discussions become smoother and trust is easier to establish," she said.

At iFlytek's exhibition booth, Zhang also bought a dual-screen translation machine, at a cost of about 4,000 yuan (\$550).

"Compared to mobile translation

apps, this AI translation device remains reliable in noisy environments and can complete translations in less than one second with rapid responses," said Zhang.

After scanning a QR code to enter a WeChat mini-program and paying a deposit, exhibitors and buyers were also able to rent smart translation devices during the fair.

The popularity of the AI translator was not accomplished overnight — iFlytek's AI translation devices are based on completely domestically produced technologies with over 1,000 translation patents.

In addition to offering the AI translation service during the fair, iFlytek displayed a series of products and technologies based on its large-scale deep reasoning model trained on a national computing power platform.

"Booming technologies like AI and big data will greatly help build an efficient bridge between Chinese advanced manufacturing products and overseas markets," said Zhang.

BUSINESS

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Electricity upgrades rural town's canyon tourism

By HAN JINGYAN
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In the prefecture-level city of Anyang in Henan province, the Taihang Mountain Grand Canyon spans 50 kilometers from north to south and 1.5 kilometers from east to west as the country's top-rated national tourist attraction.

Sitting on the eastern foothills of the South Taihang Mountains and covering an area of 89 square kilometers, the canyon draws visitors nationwide with its high cliffs, rugged peaks, turbulent rivers and mighty waterfalls.

The Shibanyan town, administering 228 natural villages with over 3,000 households, is dubbed a "hundred-mile gallery" and is a core scenic spot in the canyon.

The town, with 459 guesthouses engaged in tourism, ushered in 40,000-odd arrivals of visitors daily during the May Day five-day holiday.

The winding mountain roads were crowded with tourists and photographers vying to view this "living fossil of agricultural civilization" hidden deep in the Taihang Mountains.

Over 100 undeveloped primitive landscapes, similar to Shibanyan, are located in the canyon area.

Local residents have lived here for generations, and with a tenacious pioneering spirit, they have cultivated layers of terraced fields among the cliffs and made magnificent human wonders with their diligent hands, said Yang Zengfu, president of the local sketching industry association.

"Nowadays, the clients are coming all the year round, and the local tourism income jumped by 15 percent during the past winter," he said.

The photography enthusiasts are extremely interested, setting up their cameras on the viewing platforms for taking photos here, he said.

Beijing nature photographer Chen Yunzhou was in Shibanyan for the third time, saying: "The panoramic view of Shibanyan's cliffs is unobstructed, and the texture of its rock layers can be revealed in every detail. In the morning mist and in the clouds, I can get a large picture without much effort. This is the ultimate expression of natural aesthetics."

Yang added it was the upgrade of electricity that has made it a reality for peak seasons to become even more prosperous.

In the fully-electric scenic area of Shibanyan, the electric vehicle charging piles are ready for work with full load, while in the kitchens of the local fully-electric homestays, the chefs are working busily.

Statistics showed that in recent years, the State Grid Anyang Power Supply Co has attached vital importance to upgrading rural power grid by letting 3,000-meter-long overhead cables in Shibanyan go underground, and added 48 charging piles for electric sightseeing vehicles in the scenic spots, achieving a service radius coverage of 500 meters.

Eying the dispersed homestays scattering in the mountainous regions, the State Grid Shibanyan Power Supply Station has established an "electricity archive" since 2016, dynamically recording the electricity demand of the town's 459 homestays.

As of April 21 this year, the power staffers had newly added 1,000 kilovolt-amperes for the clients, providing tailored services for 26 fully-electric homestays including Jinzhangdeng Homestay.

As villagers in Shibanyan in the county-level city of Linzhou live scattered and some guesthouses sit in secluded regions deep in the Taihang Mountains, the State Grid workers launched village-wide improvement by visiting residents face to face to optimize services.

For each new guesthouse, the power workers would provide on-site services, guide the client in upgrading power equipment and establish power archives.

"Our power supply is very reliable, and the service is excellent," said Guo Bin, owner of the Zhangdeng Guesthouse.

"We have ushered in a new power protection mechanism, allowing prompt response by integrating command center coordination, equipment operation and maintenance, emergency repair, and timely customer service," said Liu Wei, chief of the operations and inspection department under State Grid Anyang Power Supply Co.



Two staffers from State Grid Anyang Power Supply Co guide a new energy vehicle driver in using a charging pile in the Taihang Mountain Grand Canyon in Anyang, Henan province, prior to the May Day holiday. SU SHIYI / FOR CHINA DAILY



A manager (left) introduces cross-border payment services of XTransfer, a Shanghai-based platform, to an overseas buyer during the 137th China Import and Export Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 15. QIU QUANLIN / CHINA DAILY

Fintech service platforms support cross-border trade

Solutions are being created to make it easier for SMEs to expand business

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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Chinese fintech service platforms launched incentive policies during the recent 137th China Import and Export Fair, popularly known as the Canton Fair, to assist exporters in continuously expanding their businesses to the global market.

WorldFirst, an international payment service provider and a subsidiary of Ant International, used the fair to officially launch an initiative called "Guardian Plan", an all-in-one cross-border trade financial services solution that integrates the platform's core products.

By leveraging digital technology, the solution aims to enhance the operational capabilities of small and medium-sized enterprises in cross-border trade in terms of payments, order fulfillment, foreign exchange management and financial services.

The solution is expected to help improve the efficiency of cross-border merchants' fund circulation by up to 30 percent, according to the company.

"Safe, reliable and trustworthy

high-quality cross-border payment services can effectively compensate for the localization shortcomings when Chinese businesses expand overseas," said Ma Qisheng, general manager of WorldFirst China's cross-border trade.

"Guardian Plan" will comprehensively enhance the competitiveness of domestic cross-border trade enterprises, further reduce costs, increase trust with buyers and overcome challenges in emerging markets, according to Ma.

In traditional operating modes, a cross-border trade payment may take around a week to be credited, with high intermediary bank fees, according to the company.

Through financial services such as global collections, fulfillment, currency exchange and payments under "Guardian Plan", the fastest turnaround time for fund transfers can be completed in just a few hours, allowing domestic sellers to truly achieve worry-free payments.

The company began operations of its digital and cross-border trade operation centers in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, in April, marking a milestone in its efforts to promote the development

of cross-border digital trade.

As of 2024, WorldFirst had served over one million micro-multinational enterprises globally, with transaction volumes exceeding \$300 billion.

"We plan to use the digital cross-border payment service in expansion of the African market," said Zhang Haihan, founder of Guangzhou PrintFash Ltd.

By leveraging technological innovation such as AI design tools and flexible supply chains, the Guangzhou-based clothing company developed a print on demand platform in 2024, allowing overseas buyers to place orders more efficiently and offering more personalized small-batch T-shirts to the overseas market.

The POD platform has helped the company expand its partnerships in Ethiopia and other emerging regions, focusing on developing clothing brands locally.

"The digital payment plan helps us solve the difficulty of cross-border payments and allows us to use less capital to start business," said Zhang.

By using WorldFirst services for OEM children's clothing, the company saves 40 percent of payment costs each year, according to Zhang.

Deng Guobiao, founder and CEO of XTransfer, another leading cross-border trade payment platform based in Shanghai, said the compa-

ny would launch a multi-market layout to support Chinese exporters in opening local accounts in more than 30 currencies to help reduce costs in cross-border trading.

"For example, settling directly in Mexican pesos can help reduce the cost of US dollar exchange rate fluctuations," said Deng.

The company will also provide financial services to reputable SMEs, including credit loans and order financing to help them improve fund turnover.

"On the matter of risk control in emerging markets in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we will assist small and medium-sized enterprises in effectively identifying and mitigating risks in their trades," said Deng.

Amid current uncertainties in global trade, Chinese foreign trade enterprises have demonstrated strong flexibility and resilience, as XTransfer's data indicate that many small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises have shifted their businesses to emerging markets.

In targeting these emerging markets, apart from the local payment services and risk control services, the company has developed its own industry-leading foreign trade financial model, TradePilot, to cater to the actual needs of Chinese enterprises at the marketing and customer acquisition level.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

US tariffs will ultimately hurt itself

EAGLE EYE

By Dai Weilai

The US government's plans to impose "reciprocal tariffs" on multiple countries and attach additional tariffs on specific economies over the baseline 10 percent tariff, aim to reshape foreign-trade patterns and compel other countries to prioritize its own interests. Such behavior contravenes the trend of multilateral cooperation, severely threatens the recovery of the global economy and will ultimately harm the US itself.

The so-called "reciprocal tariffs" means the US will impose equal or even higher tariffs on imports if they find tariffs on US exports are excessive, which in fact is just an excuse for the US to unilaterally suppress other countries.

The US claims to uphold "fairness", but actually imposes multiple restrictions and invisible barriers on industries such as high-end technology, intellectual property and agriculture. Value-added taxes are often regarded as "criminal evidence" that other countries "take advantage of the United States", while the endless taxes, technical barriers and subsidies from the US are not mentioned.

However, if the US really wants to achieve fairness, it could reduce the tariffs through engaging in negotiations rather than arbitrarily destroying the WTO dispute settlement mechanism or unilaterally "punish" other countries by abusing tariffs.

US economist and Nobel economics laureate Paul Krugman has pointed out that the government's approach to trade has "gone crazy and out of control".

Previously, the US had announced a 90-day pause for other countries until July 9, while continuing to increase tariffs on China. However, the maximum pressure from Washington may work for other countries, but not for China, and instead of achieving the desired goals, it will trigger serious negative ripple effects.

In his reelection campaign, then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump vowed to eliminate the US-China trade deficit. The US economy has been pushed into an absurd cycle with its current trade policy — tariffs are getting higher and higher, and the marginal benefits are sharply diminishing, culmi-



inating in an extreme outcome — zero trade.

The government repeatedly claims that "reciprocal tariffs" would bring manufacturing back to the US and replenish fiscal revenues, yet this is only economic self-deception. In fact, the outflow of

traditional manufacturing in the US was due to multiple structural factors, including the preference of enterprises for high-value-added financial and service industries, as well as rising labor costs and changing technology demand.

Artificially raising the price of

imported goods through tariff barriers will only force US enterprises to obtain parts and raw materials at a higher cost, greatly reducing their competitiveness and driving up domestic inflation, and ultimately leading to a rise in people's living costs, which

will outweigh any upsides.

As a major power in the world, the US should act as such in a responsible way. However, the frequent backsliding and wanton changes in trade rules of the government have damaged the country's credibility of itself. The US has become an unreli-

able and fickle player in global economic governance, with its strategic credibility and international status being continuously eroded by its shortsighted behavior.

The US is trying to curb China's economic development through high tariffs, but the reality is quite the opposite. The global supply chain has formed an intricate network, and China has cultivated irreplaceable advantages in basic manufacturing, support industries and labor. The high tariff policy of the US will not be able to hit China, which in turn will seriously damage its own economic interests.

China will not succumb to any form of economic coercion and will resolutely defend its legitimate rights and interests and national security through corresponding countermeasures. In accordance with relevant laws and regulations and the basic principles of international law, the Chinese government has taken a series of precise countermeasures. The reaction is a legitimate move to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests and safeguard the multilateral order, fully demonstrating China's will and position of resolutely opposing unilateral bullying and firmly defending fair trade.

History has long proven that large-scale unilateral tariff hikes will only lead to more sanctions lists and tit-for-tat confrontations, escalating tensions between countries. By deploying a combination of multiple countermeasures precisely, China has sent a clear and unmistakable signal to the world — "Attempts to coerce or blackmail China will not succeed, nor will they intimidate China", as Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao has said.

Neither the US, nor any other country, is immune to today's deeply interconnected global economy landscape. If the US continues to indulge in pursuing benefits through maximum pressure on other economies, sooner or later it will find itself in a stalemate in its foreign relations and lose the last patience of the world for its lack of credibility.

Thereby, the US should abandon unilateral bullying and create more opportunities for participation and win-win results for all countries through multilateral dialogue and consultation, so as to maintain sustainable influence and development space in the context of global competition and cooperation.

The writer is a professor at the China Institute at Fudan University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

China to boost economy by promoting consumption, opening-up

MAIN STREET

By Yang Yiyong

China is accelerating the establishment of a new development pattern where domestic and foreign markets can boost each other, with the domestic market as the mainstay, amid economic risks from home and abroad. By tapping the potential of domestic demand and pursuing high-standard opening-up, China's economy will not only pave the way for its own development, but also provide a strong impetus for global economic recovery and growth.

President Xi Jinping once said: "The Chinese economy is not a pond, but an ocean," pointing out that China's economy has strong resilience and broad prospects, which is attributable to the broad domestic consumer market and inclusive opening-up policy.

With a population exceeding 1.4 billion and a rapidly expanding middle-income group, China's domestic demand market is growing at an unprecedented pace, which offers vast business opportunities for foreign enterprises, particularly in sectors such as consumer electronics, automobiles, luxury goods and services.

This trend is also key to China's

economic stability in the face of complex international trade tensions. Through the implementation of a series of policies such as trade-in subsidies and the expansion of individual income tax exemptions, the government has effectively promoted household consumption and enhanced the endogenous momentum and stability of the economy.

From the production side, China's current industrial system stands unparalleled globally, covering every link from raw material extraction to final product manufacturing. The comprehensiveness of the industrial system not only boosts production efficiency, but also minimizes reliance on external resources, thereby strengthening economic autonomy and risk resilience.

Supported by national strategy and policies, China is accelerating technological innovation and industrial upgrading, especially in high-tech fields such as semiconductors, new energy and aerospace. All of these are beneficial for consolidating the advantages of existing industries and cultivating new economic growth points.

Furthermore, under the guidance of the theory of new quality productive forces, scientific and technological innovation has become the core driving force for China's economic development. These years, China has continued to increase investment in research and development, encouraging enterprises to innovate and promote the industrialization of scientific and technological achievements.

In cutting-edge science and technology fields such as artificial intelligence, 5G communications and quantum computing, China is gradually moving to the forefront of the world. The technological innovation in these fields not only improves efficiency and competitiveness of traditional industries, but also gives birth to new industries and business models. For example, the deep integration of the digital economy and the real economy has promoted the vigorous development of intelligent manufacturing and e-commerce, injecting a steady stream of vitality into China's economy.

By flexibly using fiscal, monetary and industrial policies, the government is able to respond quickly to economic fluctuations and maintain stable economic growth. In particular, timely and effective policy measures have played a key role in addressing major economic challenges, such as the global financial crisis and the pandemic.

At the same time, China's government has also paid attention to the combination of long-term and short-term goals, such as the implementation of the 13th and 14th five-year plans and the devising of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which clarifies the direction and focus of national development and ensured the sustained and healthy economic development.

To defend against economic risks, China has taken a series of measures including diversifying export markets, strengthening coordination with countries involved in the Belt

Under the guidance of the theory of new quality productive forces, scientific and technological innovation has become the core driving force for China's economic development. These years, China has continued to increase investment in research and development, encouraging enterprises to innovate and promote the industrialization of scientific and technological achievements.

and Road Initiative and promoting the construction of free trade zones, effectively alleviating pressure caused by trade frictions with the US since 2018.

Meanwhile, China has made contributions to maintaining the balance of world trade and successfully promoted the upgrading of domestic industries and consumption through conducting positive import

policies such as hosting the China International Import Expo, showcasing the inclusiveness and openness of the country's market.

At present, China's financial system has become more robust and efficient after a series of reforms and adjustments. In particular, the steady progress of renminbi internationalization has not only enhanced China's position in global financial markets, but also helped to reduce exchange rate risks and enhance the stability of international trade and investment, making China's economy much more resilient and solid.

Through the implementation of the strategy of coordinated regional development, China has promoted economic cooperation and complementarity among different regions, forming a number of economic growth poles.

For example, the coordinated development of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the integration of the Yangtze River Delta and the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area have not only optimized the allocation of resources, but also promoted the development of surrounding areas and enhanced the resilience and vitality of the entire national economy. This kind of interregional synergy has enabled China's economy to recover quickly and move forward in the face of challenges through the support and cooperation of other regions.

China is now focusing on the quality and efficiency of economic

growth as the economy shifts from high-speed growth to high-quality development, which commands promoting green development, smart manufacturing and services to achieve harmonious economic, social and environmental development.

High-quality development also means paying attention to all-round development of the citizenry, which means to enhance the quality of people's quality of life by improving the level of public services such as education, medical care and culture, so that the fruits of reform and development can benefit all people more fairly.

Moving forward, China will also continue to adhere to open regionalism, deepen economic and trade cooperation with other countries, and promote the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative so as to promote the prosperity and stability of the global economy. By actively participating in global economic governance and fostering the building of an open world economy, China is willing to work hand-in-hand with other countries to jointly address global challenges and achieve common development.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 02:20 PM

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

Mutual respect the foundation for navigating China-US trade talks

The continuous introduction of unjustified tariff measures by the United States has brought great uncertainty and instability to the world. By fabricating so-called reciprocal tariffs out of thin air, it has taken a wrecking ball to the trade relations it already had under the framework of the World Trade Organization and has sought to do a demolition job on the existing global industry and supply chains. In doing so, it has conjured up a storm of chaos in both the markets and within the US, which has created further spillover effects negatively impacting economies worldwide.

In the face of the US administration's reckless attacks on trade, China has taken decisive countermeasures, not only to safeguard its own legitimate rights and interests, but also to safeguard the WTO rules that are the foundation of the global trade system. It is committed to defending the international economic and trade rules, fairness and justice, including for US businesses and consumers, in the face of the US administration's wrong practices.

It is natural for WTO members to have economic and trade differences, but solutions to their respective concerns should be found through consultations on the basis of mutual respect and equality. Which is why Beijing accepted the US' administration's invitation to engage in talks.

It has made it clear that it views the meeting in Geneva on the weekend, between a delegation led by Vice-Premier He Lifeng and a US one led by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, as being a prelude to establish how sincere the US is about negotiating a mutually acceptable trade deal rather than a meeting to haggle over tariff rates.

Beijing remains open to dialogue with strategic patience, but the talks should not be a pretext for continued coercion or extortion, and it will firmly reject any proposal that compromises its core principles or undermines the broader cause of global equity.

No matter how arduous the road ahead, China will continue to safeguard its development interests and defend the WTO rules and the multilateral trading system.

China knows clearly that submitting to the US' blackjacked blackmail would only invite more extortion; that appeasement will not bring peace, and compromise will

not earn respect in return.

It will therefore continue to demonstrate its determination and willingness to fight, if fight it must, for its own good and that of the world. And it stands ready to work with the international community to enhance solidarity and coordination.

If a negotiated solution is truly what the US wants, it should stop threatening and exerting pressure, and talk with China to that end on the basis of equality and respect.

Given the zero-sum game mentality that prevails in the US policymaking circle and the fixation of the current US administration on recreating some mythical "golden past", the possibility is slim that the US will stop stirring the waters any time soon. So the trade aggression initiated by the US may be just the opening salvo of a "protracted war". But China's core interests are not tradable, and it is prepared for that.

The Chinese economy has repeatedly shown that it is highly resilient under pressure, and Beijing has a full toolbox to defend the country's legitimate rights and interests. No external shocks can change China's economic fundamentals, nor the Chinese economy's resilience and potential.

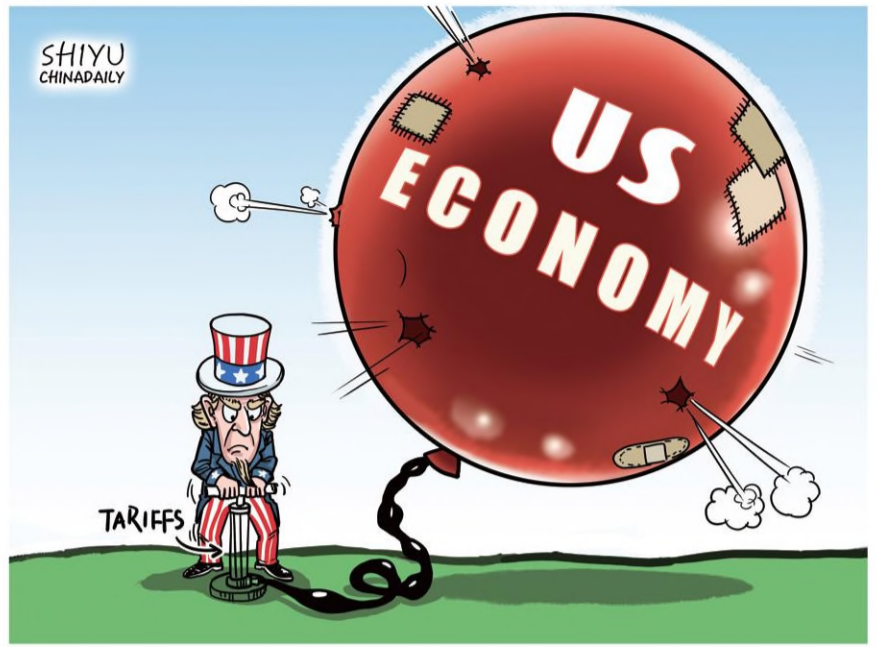
The profits of China's industrial enterprises, for example, rose 0.8 percent to 1.5 trillion yuan (\$207.26 billion) in the first quarter year-on-year, in line with other indicators that point to the increasing recovery momentum of the world's second-largest economy.

In contrast, the US administration will find it is increasingly pressured by the piling up of national debt, which is like a ticking time bomb. Time is not on the US' side, it is already finding it difficult to pay the interest payments on more than \$36 trillion.

China is willing to work with the US, to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation. But the US administration must back up the conciliatory remarks it has been making with constructive and concrete actions.

The unilateral practices of the US have no place in today's world where all countries should be striving for a shared future of friendship and prosperity. It is the US that is responsible for the trade war. It is therefore its responsibility to create the conditions for moving forward. It is on this basis that the US can escape from the predicament in which it has put itself.

Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Sino-Brazilian partnership paradigm for modern relations

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's state visit to China from Saturday to Wednesday marks a significant milestone in the relations between the two largest developing nations of the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Against the backdrop of global turbulence marked by geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainties and rising protectionism, the two countries have demonstrated how their strategic partnership serves as both an anchor of stability and an engine for sustainable development.

The China-Brazil relationship stands as a textbook example of economic complementarity. Brazil supplies China with critical imports including soybeans, beef, poultry and iron ore, commodities essential for China's food security and industrial growth. In return, China provides Brazil with manufactured goods ranging from mechanical equipment and chemical products to cutting-edge computers and telecommunications technology.

This symbiotic relationship has produced remarkable results. China has been Brazil's biggest trade partner for 16 consecutive years and Brazil is the first Latin American country to hit a trading volume of over \$100 billion with China. According to statistics from China's General Administration of Customs, the bilateral trade volume between China and Brazil reached \$188.17 billion in 2024, marking a year-on-year increase of 3.56 percent.

The political foundation of this relationship is equally robust. Brazil holds the distinction of being the first country to establish a strategic partnership with China, and the first Latin American nation to upgrade relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The frequent high-level exchanges between the two nations in recent years have trans-

formed this relationship into a reliable friendship with a shared future.

The partnership between the two countries has evolved beyond bilateral benefits to become what analysts describe as a "positive force for peace" in international relations. In an era where great power competition is frequently disrupting global stability, China-Brazil relations offer an alternative model based on mutual respect and shared development.

As leading voices of emerging economies, China and Brazil share a fundamental commitment to reforming the international order to make it more equitable and inclusive. Their coordinated positions in multilateral forums including BRICS, the G20 and the United Nations amplify the concerns of developing nations on critical issues ranging from climate finance to trade justice.

The climate partnership between the two nations deserves particular attention. Brazil, as custodian of the Amazon rainforest, plays an irreplaceable role in global carbon sequestration. China, meanwhile, has emerged as the world's largest investor in renewable energy. Together, they are pioneering innovative approaches to sustainable development that balance economic growth with environmental protection.

China's investments in Latin American sustainability projects align perfectly with Brazil's climate goals, including its pledge to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 67 percent by 2035. Their joint initiatives in reforestation and clean energy demonstrate how developing nations can lead the global green transition.

In contrast to Western-led models that often attach political conditions to economic engagement, the China-Brazil partnership demonstrates the power of

pragmatic, nonideological cooperation. Their collaboration in sensitive technology sectors, including Brazil's participation in China's satellite program and its independent decision to include Huawei in its 5G rollout despite external pressure, underscores the strategic autonomy at the heart of their relationship.

The partnership has matured into what analysts describe as a "new paradigm" for South-South cooperation. From infrastructure development to technological innovation, China and Brazil are writing a playbook for how developing nations can collaborate on equal footing to achieve mutual prosperity.

The strengthened China-Brazil partnership has emerged as more than just a bilateral success story. In an increasingly fractured world, it stands as a powerful testament to the potential of cooperation over confrontation and shared development over zero-sum competition.

The implications extend far beyond their national borders. By demonstrating how major developing nations can work together to address global challenges, China and Brazil are lighting the path for the entire Global South. Their partnership offers a compelling vision for a more balanced, inclusive international order, one where developing nations have greater voice and agency in shaping their collective future.

As both nations continue to deepen their ties across all sectors, the world would do well to study this model of South-South cooperation. In the China-Brazil partnership, we may be witnessing the emergence of a new architecture for international relations in the 21st century, one built on mutual respect, shared prosperity and common development.

—ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Peace of paramount importance for region

India and Pakistan announced on Saturday that they had agreed to a ceasefire, with immediate effect, following four days of military strikes on each other.

The ceasefire serves to prevent further escalation of the conflict between the two archrivals in South Asia, that was started by India launching air strikes on Pakistani targets on Wednesday to avenge the killing of 26 people by terrorists in Pahalgam, Indian-controlled Kashmir, last month.

Tremendous amounts of diplomatic efforts, including by China, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, helped broker the truce. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had telephone conversations respectively with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday.

Given the important role China plays in the region, particularly its close relations with Pakistan, which quickly gained the upper hand in the conflict after India's first wave of attacks, it is fair to say Beijing played a key role in helping to calm the situation.

As Wang told Doval, with the world undergoing both transformation and upheaval, the hard-won peace and stability in Asia should be cherished.

Considering the heavy price they have paid, separately and jointly, for the peace and stability of the region, it should be a consensus of India and Pakistan that it would be foolish to allow the conflict triggered by a terrorist attack to escalate into a full-blown war.

India's suffering from the Pahalgam attacks and New Delhi's domestic pressure are both understandable. China is also a victim of terrorist attacks in the region with its engineers and workers working for local projects being targeted. That's why Beijing has strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam and reiterated its staunch opposition to terrorism in any form.

Terrorism is a common enemy of humanity and a challenge to the world, including the countries and regions where the terrorists come from. It thus entails solidarity, cooperation and mutual assistance to fight terrorism by eliminating not only the terrorists but also the space and conditions that allow terrorism to take root in a region, for instance, by addressing poverty and the widening development gaps.

A war will not resolve the terrorism issue. China supports Pakistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, while expressing confidence that Pakistan will respond to the current situation calmly, and make decisions in line with its long-term interests.

It is thus heartening to see that New Delhi has come back to its senses. With both sides accusing the other of ceasefire violations, it is important that India and Pakistan now work together to bring the resolution of the issue to the right track of dialogue and consultation, which meets the common aspiration of the international community.

Wang has emphasized China's support for the ceasefire and stressed the need for both sides to adhere to it to prevent further conflict, according to readouts from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ceasefire halts the worst fighting in decades between the nuclear-armed neighbors, and both New Delhi and Islamabad know it's in neither India's nor Pakistan's interest for the conflict to continue, so it is to be hoped that constructive diplomacy will enable the two sides to appease public ire and draw a line under their current frictions.

Moving on from that, the two sides should look to seize the opportunity of talks to try and work toward resolving their long-standing differences, to prevent conflict being sparked again in the future, as there is no guarantee that the sparks of animosity will not create an inferno if they erupt again.

What They Say

'Fruit of victory' UK deal untenable 'template'

The US government announced that it had signed a trade deal with the United Kingdom on Thursday. Its first. Although the deal, which can only be called a framework document, was packaged as a "fruit of victory" for the United States' tariff policy, its actual impact may be very limited.

The two countries did not sign any physical document that day. The White House admitted that the final details of the deal have not yet been formed. The Keir Starmer government of the UK also said that the details of the deal still need to be "finalized".

In essence, it is closer to a "political declaration" made by the US administration to claim its ill-advised tariff policy is rational and thus stabilize market confidence at home.

According to UK media reports, although the US has made some concessions on tariffs on imported cars, steel and aluminum from the UK, it has sustained a 10 percent base tariff on most other goods imported from the UK.

So the US administration's exaggerated self-praise of its tariff policy will only further aggravate its own credit crisis.

Not only that, the agreement also contains measures targeting China in the UK's supply chains.

According to UK media reports, in the agreement, the US side set strict so-called security clauses for sectors such as steel and pharmaceuticals, requiring the relevant UK industries to meet the US' requirements for supply chain security and ownership of production facilities as soon as possible in order to obtain exemptions or preferential policies for US tariffs.

Although on the surface this clause applies to all third countries, according to UK officials' disclosure to the media, the US is actually targeting China.

Therefore, the move by the US administration is essentially a further escalation of the US' long-term policy of restricting China's participation in the global supply chains of strategic commodities.

Washington hopes that the UK and other countries will disclose key information on their trade, industry, technology and research and development, and eventually cut off economic and trade ties with China, especially in sensitive areas such as steel.

The White House declared that the trade agreement with the UK is likely to become a template for other countries that want to reach a trade agreement with the US, making clear that its aim is to exclude China from key supply chains, and coerce allies to reduce trade and

investment cooperation with China in certain areas earmarked by the US.

The UK should be clear that if the final deal between it and the US shows that in exchange for tariff exemptions, it has further echoed the US' position on trade with China, as some observers warn, China is likely to retaliate in some form.

Regarding the unreasonable tariff policy of the US, China's position remains consistent. Whether the US wants to continue the trade fight or to talk, China's determination to safeguard its own development interests will not change, and its position and goal of defending international fairness and justice and maintaining the international economic and trade order will not change.

China will keep its door open for talks, but any dialogue and negotiation must be carried out on the premise of mutual respect, equal consultation, and mutual benefit.

No matter how the international situation changes, China will always remain steadfast in expanding its opening-up, firmly upholding the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core, and actively share its development opportunities with all like-minded countries in the world.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM

COMMENT



Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:20 PM
China and the World Roundtable | China-Russia Relations

Editor's note: China-Russia ties have enjoyed stable, healthy and high-level development thanks to joint efforts from both sides. And China will work with Russia to shoulder the special responsibility as major countries of the world and take a clear stand to promote the correct historical perspective on World War II. Experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Xu Wenhong

Aligned for peace and development

Almost all countries in the world, even islands inhabited by only penguins in the Pacific, are facing the United States' tariff war.

Against this backdrop, China's participation in Russia's Victory Day parade, marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War, a normal diplomatic practice, is distorted by some Western observers as a sign of China and Russia forming an "anti-West alliance".

In reality, "non-alignment" remains a cornerstone of China's foreign policy. China does not believe in forming an alliance with any country. Instead, it is open to developing normal relations with all countries, because it believes that alliances, which by nature are exclusive and confrontational, conflict with its advocacy for multilateralism and the democratization of international relations, and its vision for a community with a shared future for mankind.

China aims to develop normal ties with the US, the EU and all other economies, and has established robust economic and diplomatic relations with almost all countries. Yet some experts, oblivious to historical trends, global dynamics and even their own interests, are being manipulated by the media and made to blindly oppose, even slander, China.

The celebrations to mark the Soviet Union's victory in World War II are a normal sociopolitical activity aimed at educating the younger generations about their forefathers' sufferings and the fight against fascism. But some Western countries have made it a habit to deny or downplay the key roles the Soviet Union and China played in the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War.

Worse, certain political groups, in recent years, have been trying to defend Nazi Germany and fascist Japan's militarism and war crimes, in order to fan the flames of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia, while some Western observers tend to overlook the Allied powers' mutual support, and deny their key role in defeating the Axis powers. As the major victims of and major contributors to the victory in World War II, China and Russia have the responsibility to safeguard the truth and history.

If attending events like the Victory Day Parade means forming alliances, why did former US president George



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W. Bush and representatives from more than 50 countries attend the 60th anniversary of the victory in the "Great Patriotic War"? And why did former US president Barack Obama send a US military contingent to attend the 65th Victory Day in Moscow

after his busy schedule prevented him from attending the event in person? There is no denying the fact that China, Russia and the US, and other countries, united as one to fight against fascism during World War II. Later, however, US and European leaders stopped participating in Russia's parades and even hindered World War II veteran exchanges between the US and Russia, and the EU and Russia, revealing the divisions between the US and its allies and raising unwarranted suspicion over China-Russia relations.

China and Russia also played crucial roles in post-war reconstruction. As UN founding members and permanent UN Security Council members,

Russia and China are the pillars of the post-war international edifice and shoulder the mission of safeguarding global peace. By attending the parade in Moscow, Chinese leaders have been fulfilling China's commitment to commemorate the victory over fascist forces and thwart future global threats. Being a staunch defender of peace, China will host similar events to highlight history's lessons.

China and Russia issued a joint statement on Thursday on further deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, agreeing to push forward the high-level development of bilateral ties, uphold a correct historical perspective on World War II and firmly defend international fairness and justice. China and Russia have been reiterating that their relationship, based on "no alliance, no confrontation, and no targeting of third countries", is one of strategic partnership based on equality, trust, and offers a new model for international relations, balances power among major countries and promotes multipolarity. Also, the Sino-Russian partnership shows countries can achieve common development and pursue mutual benefit without entering into or forming a military alliance.

The non-alliance partnership model between China and Russia not only reflects the diplomatic wisdom of both countries but also provides inspiration for third parties to engage in flexible diplomacy.

The Sino-Russian partnership will not harm any country unless that country intends to harm the two countries or poses a threat to their common interests. And "non-alignment" does not mean China will tolerate acts violating international law, or infringing upon its lawful rights and interests.

As Confucius said that a petty man is often troubled, while a gentleman is always at ease. Instead of speculating on Sino-Russian relations, the West would do better to reflect on the disastrous consequences of trade protectionism before World War II and demonstrate it has the wisdom to deal with today's common global challenges. By learning from history, we can avoid repeating the mistakes that led to World War II and maintain lasting global peace.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Alexander Lukin

Staunch supporters of UN-centered system

The visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Moscow to attend the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War was very significant for Sino-Russian relations as well as the international community as a whole.

The Soviet Union and China played significant roles in the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War. They were among the Allies' principal members. After the war, they played a key role in establishing the United Nations, which was envisioned as a guarantor of global peace and the foundation of the post-war international system.

Unfortunately, the cooperation of the allies did not last long after the war. Russia and China laid the foundation for a multipolar world order — what is referred to in China as an "equal and orderly multipolar world". Hence, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is important for not only the two countries and stability in East Asia, but also consolidating the foundation of such a world.

In fact, Sino-Russian cooperation gave rise to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. The SCO evolved from Sino-Soviet border negotiations and confidence-building measures, which after the disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the formation of the "Shanghai Five", comprising China and four former Soviet republics, including Russia. The SCO was official-



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ly launched in Shanghai after Uzbekistan joined it in 2001. Over the years, the SCO has become an influential international organization with 10 full members, two observer states, and 14 dialogue partners.

The SCO member states cover about 36 million square kilometers, have a combined population of more than 3.4 billion, and account for about a quarter of global GDP and more than 15 percent of international trade.

Despite all their differences, the Shanghai Spirit respects diversity, supports every country's right to choose its political system and development model, promotes shared prosperity, aims to reduce disparities between the Global North and Global South, and calls for abandoning the Cold War mentality.

Another crucial process jointly initiated by China and Russia is the linkage of the Eurasian Economic Union, comprising five former Soviet republics — Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia — with the China-

proposed Belt and Road Initiative, which laid the groundwork for a new system of economic partnership in "Greater Eurasia".

Meanwhile, the BRICS grouping has acquired even more importance as it offers its own vision of global governance, with the reform of the global economy being one of its key concerns. BRICS member states strongly advocate increasing the representation of non-Western countries in international financial institutions.

Initially, BRICS served as a voice for the Global South and an alternative to the G7. But this role proved insufficient. Facing strong resistance from traditional centers of global finance, BRICS countries are making efforts to help reform international financial institutions by establishing their own development bank and currency reserve pool, offering developing countries an alternative for development funding and crisis response.

BRICS also aims to strengthen the UN Security Council's central role in international relations and the world order, and leverage the complementarity of its member economies for accelerated development.

Supporting the central role of the UN and its Security Council in maintaining stability in a multipolar world is a key idea of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, continuing the vision of the key allies, which after the end of World War II believed that despite their differences, they could preserve their wartime cooperation to

maintain global peace and prevent another catastrophic war. That's why the UN Security Council was designed in a way that would require a consensus among its permanent members to make a decision and reach a compromise. Unfortunately, that commitment to compromise was not sustained.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some big power tried to promote a new system based on its own rules, leading to numerous global conflicts, and undermined the UN's ability to resolve them. It labelled Russia and China "revisionist" powers, although it is Russia and China that work to preserve the international system with the UN at its core.

The "unipolar moment" has ended, and multipolarity is strengthening. In this environment, there is no higher arbiter or coordinator of global affairs than the UN. It is for this reason that BRICS, the SCO and the Global South insist on strengthening the UN's central role.

China and Russia suffered huge losses in World War II, with tens of millions of their citizens perishing, prompting them to consistently uphold the tradition of cooperation between the wartime allies. Hopefully, their former allies will soon remember that fruitful cooperation.

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

Alexander Kuleshov and Evgeny Burnaev

Eurasia needs an innovation corridor for artificial intelligence

The race metaphor that dominates talk of artificial intelligence has always felt misplaced. Races finish; partnerships keep accelerating. China and Russia, bookending the Eurasian landmass and linked by decades of scientific exchange, can either compete in parallel or let every research hour and GPU cycle serve both sides. Collaboration is the stronger choice, for reasons that reach beyond any single news cycle.

First comes talent. Commentators still speak of a one way "talent outflow" from Moscow and Beijing to the West. The best graduates of Tsinghua or Skoltech board flights to San Francisco more often than they move laterally across Eurasia to each other. The remedy is to redirect that mobility — by intensifying joint exchanges between Russia and China and by giving young researchers really ambitious projects.

Technology ecosystems point in the same direction. Russia's RuNet and China's internet sphere evolved behind different languages, cultures and rules. Yandex optimizes for Cyrillic privacy norms; Baidu does the same for Chinese-language users. Because neither platform is likely to dominate the other's market, both sides are free to perfect local services and share hard-won lessons — whether in low-resource speech recognition or edge-ready recommendation engines — without fear of direct substitution.

Complementarity is sharper still at the research frontier. China fields the world's largest cohort of AI scientists and operates petascale public clouds. Russia's community is smaller but rests on a century-deep tradition of mathematical rigour that keeps producing fresh algorithms in optimization, probabilistic modelling and physics-informed learning. Scale plus theory is not redundancy; it is synergy.

Evidence of that synergy is already visible. In industry, Sber and Huawei began collaborating in 2021, piloting a "Smart Campus" that wove Sber's Salute voice assistant into Huawei edge devices. The proof-of-concept has evolved into SberCloud-Advanced, a comprehensive cloud suite comprising 37 services that currently drive workloads across Russia.

Academia is matching that pace. This July the Skoltech AI Center and Harbin Institute of Technology will run SMILES-2025, a 12-day summer school expected to gather up to 300 early-career researchers. Morning lectures on generative models and safe reinforcement learning will give way to evening hackathons on rice-disease detection or polar route navigation — topics chosen because they straddle shared climatic and economic frontiers.

Reliable working links matter, too. Researchers from Skoltech Laboratory of Superconducting Quantum Technologies are working closely with colleagues at the University of Science and Technology of China and Tsinghua University, exploring approaches to error mitigation in multi-qubit superconducting circuits, while the Center for Molecular and Cellular Biology is working with Zhejiang University on how RNA structure steers alternative splicing — work that could unlock next generation therapies. Each project is small in budget yet large in symbolism: collaboration is happening at the quantum and molecular scale alike.

On the computational side, the Skoltech AI&Supercomputing Laboratory, headed by professor Sergey Rykovanov, partners with SIOM to apply deep learning control to high power laser systems, paving the way toward compact particle accelerators and photon sources for advanced cancer therapy. Their HPC workflows simulate laser-plasma interactions, optimize signal processing pipelines and keep the joint infrastructure energy-efficient, turning theory and hardware into deployable technology.

Public policy can amplify this momentum. One practical step would be bilateral compute vouchers that let Russian mathematicians train large models on China's public GPU clouds, while Chinese colleagues refine medical diagnosis networks on federated Russian clinical datasets. An open data charter covering weather, climate risk and industrial safety would allow Yangtze typhoon radar sweeps to meet Arctic wind field lidar, producing continental-scale forecasts neither side could build alone. Cross-border "lighthouse" pilots — hydro-power prediction for both the Baikal and Yangtze basins, or federated multimodal cancer imaging — could be co-funded by provincial governments and staffed by mixed academic industry teams. Finally, a shared PhD pipeline with dual supervision would let dissertations themselves become nodes in this corridor, training graduates who think in both languages and both styles of problem-solving.

Coupling complementary strengths would fortify domestic ecosystems while positioning Eurasia to set the global pace in AI. By institutionalizing a seamless flow of people, data and ideas between Moscow and Beijing, the region can leapfrog existing hubs and become the world's foremost center of artificial intelligence. When that happens, the commit logs of tomorrow's defining algorithms will carry both Cyrillic and Chinese characters, and the rest of the world will look to Eurasia for inspiration.

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



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GLOBAL VIEWS



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

KONSTANTINOS GRIVAS

Demolition drive

The US is attempting to maintain its hegemony by fragmenting the current global geopolitical and geoeconomic status quo

The United States' policies have created multiple upheavals in international affairs and have sparked numerous reactions around the world. However, it would likely be a grave mistake to consider these actions as products of some personal idiosyncrasies, let alone impulsive or irrational moves without long-term geopolitical aims. Even theories suggesting that these



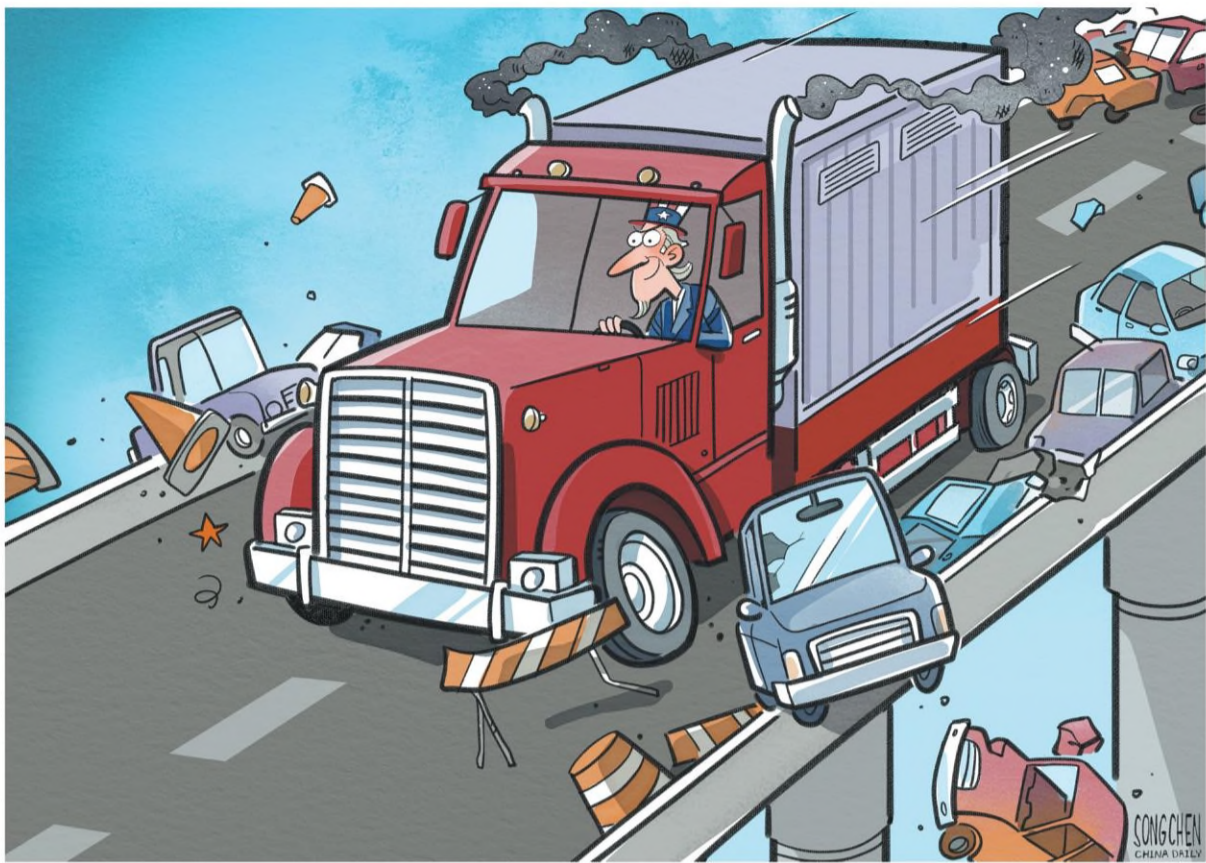
actions target China or seek to revive US industry through a mercantilist economic model may be limiting. It should be considered that these actions are part of a broader geopolitical strategy based on the theories of Halford Mackinder, Nicholas J. Spykman and Alfred Thayer Mahan. The primary pillar of US geopolitical strategy, and before that of the United Kingdom, was to avoid the emergence of a single, dominant power in Eurasia. However, today this perceived threat of a pan-Eurasian consolidation is beginning to emerge, and the US is primarily responsible for this development.

After the end of the Cold War, the Western world was dominated by the perception of the end of history and the fantasy of absolute US dominance in the world. The "unipolar moment" was considered, consciously or unconsciously, to be a permanent, timeless state. Simultaneously, the US aggressively and arrogantly promoted its political, economic and social worldviews, theories and perceptions to the rest

of the world. As a result, in response to this unnatural, fantastical aggrandizement of the West and the paranoid cessation of historical time, a gradual consolidation of Eurasian powers emerged, forming a loose yet real and functional geopolitical entity of unprecedented scale, which could be deemed the first hyperpower in human history. The Ukraine crisis has worsened the situation, as the US and Western Europe became entrapped in an intra-European conflict. This would not have been problematic until a few decades ago when European and Eurogenic powers dominated the global stage. However, today the center of gravity of the planet has shifted eastward, and if the West becomes isolated in an intra-European war, the East will be left free to advance its own plans. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the Ukraine crisis, materially and imaginatively, severed the already partially severed Russia from the rest of Europe, "Asianizing" it, providing a vast land "sea" with nearly inexhaustible resources that could benefit a range of Eurasian countries.

Thus, the possibility of a new bipolar world has emerged, in which, unlike during the Cold War, the Euro-Atlantic West will be in a significantly worse position compared to a unified Eurasia.

Therefore, the US is attempting to disrupt the Eurasian unity, which it has created itself. Specifically, the strategy of the US administration seems to be to recreate a system in which the US will continue to be the dominant power. This is



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because neither China nor Russia, nor any other country can compete on equal terms with the US alone. Much less so if competitive relations between them arise, due to historical tensions and competitive geopolitical interests. However, this is not easy to achieve. The dismantling of Eurasian consolidation cannot happen easily or quickly. However, recent developments, such as the first European Union-Central Asia summit, highlight a growing trend of cooperation within Eurasia.

The US administration and the power system that supports it are attempting a kind of shock therapy,

which is the deconstruction of the unity of the Euro-Atlantic world. The peculiar rhetoric about Greenland and the economic war launched against the EU serve this goal, among other purposes.

By causing an unprecedented rift in the unity of one candidate pole of the emerging bipolar global system, US policy seeks to activate centrifugal tendencies within the other pole, the Eurasian one, and to increase the complexity of the global system in order to drive it further toward everlasting US leadership.

In the same vein lies the deconstruction of the unified globalized

economic system. For a truly multiparty world to emerge, a multiparty international economic system is also needed, especially in today's era where the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will inevitably change the global economy.

In conclusion, what we are experiencing today is likely an attempt by the US to break the world into pieces, to fragment in some way the current global geopolitical and geoeconomic status quo, to increase complexity and ambiguity in the international system, and thus to create conditions for the resurgence of competition among

Eurasian states, so as to allow the US to leverage the advantages provided by its secure geographical position and dominance of the oceans, transforming them so it can be the maestro of the global orchestra.

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PETER T C CHANG

Moving on

Amid the US' retreat from global leadership, China and other Global South countries are working together to build a more inclusive and peaceful world

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Russia on May 7 to 10. During his State visit, he attended the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.



These anniversaries offer not only a moment for reflection, but also for reaffirming the principles of multilateralism, peace and cooperation that underpin the postwar international order.

Recently, the global governance system came under unprecedented strain because of the disruptive impact of the United States' "America First" foreign policy. In contrast, China and a growing coalition of Global South countries are joining hands to promote stability, cooperation and shared development, offering an alternative vision of global leadership rooted in mutual respect and multilateralism.

The "Make America Great Again" agenda, initiated during Donald Trump's first term as US president and continued in his second term, marks a sharp departure from decades of US engagement in multilateral institutions and alliances. The "America First" policy places US interests above all else, including the collective well-being of the world and long-established diplomatic norms.

Central to this approach has been a systematic withdrawal by the US from its global commitments. The US withdrew from the Paris Agreement, pulled it out of the World Health Organization, and unleashed a global tariff war that is undermining the World Trade Organization.

The US administration's aggressive unilateral tariffs are igniting trade tensions with allies and rivals alike. These moves signal the US has abdicated from global leadership and is reneging on its global responsibilities. As a result, there is a breakdown of trust in the US as a

stabilizing force.

The governance logic behind "America First" rests on a zero-sum worldview. Rather than seeing international cooperation as a vehicle for shared progress, this view frames global affairs as a competition where one nation's gain is another's loss. The result is not only a weakening of multilateralism but also an acceleration of global instability, especially in regions already vulnerable to conflict and economic volatility.

The effects of this unilateralist stance are reverberating across the international system. In the realm of climate governance, for example, the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement has eroded global momentum to address climate change and emboldened climate skeptics worldwide. The absence of US has left a gap in global climate financing and technology transfer, disproportionately affecting developing nations that are the least responsible for emissions but most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

In terms of geopolitical security, the US' erratic foreign policy stances have exacerbated tensions in several hotspots. In East Asia, confrontational policies toward China are fueling regional instability across the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. In the Middle East, the US' uncritical support for unilateral Israeli actions has undermined the diplomatic balance in the region and increased the risks of a wider regional conflict.

Perhaps most damaging, however, has been the erosion of trust in international norms and institutions. The UN, the WHO, the WTO and a number of other key global bodies have been sidelined or open-



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ly criticized, diminishing their legitimacy and capacity to mediate during times of crisis. This vacuum heightens risks for disorder and has deepened the divides between the Global North and the Global South. Amid the US' retreat from responsible global leadership, China and other Global South countries have stepped up to promote an alternative model of international engagement — one grounded in inclusivity, multilateralism and respect for national sovereignty.

China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and the second-largest contributor to the UN budget, has reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the international order. China has actively advanced initiatives that emphasize development and cooperation, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. These frameworks aim to bridge infrastructure

gaps, enhance connectivity and promote peaceful development across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Beyond China, many other Global South nations have intensified their commitment to South-South cooperation. Through platforms such as BRICS, the G20 and the G77, developing countries are increasingly asserting their voices in global governance debates. These coalitions advocate for reforms in international institutions to better reflect current global realities, such as expanding representation in the UN and making the global financial system more inclusive.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the tangible benefits of this alternative approach. While many Global North countries engaged in vaccine nationalism, China and other Global South actors engaged in vaccine cooperation — donating and exporting millions of doses to low-income nations, often under the COVAX framework. This effort was not merely symbolic; it demonstrated a practical commitment to global solidarity in a time of crisis.

Despite the promise of a more equitable global order, Western powers are still skeptical of China's development path, with critics questioning whether China's initiatives primarily serve geopolitical purposes. For example, in the ongoing tariff war, the US administration has pursued a strategy aimed at "encircling China" — seeking to divide and rule the Global South while hindering efforts to establish an alternative to the US-led international system.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the opportunity to build a new

form of multilateralism remains. A Global South-centered approach to governance offers several distinct advantages: it is more attuned to the needs of developing nations, rooted in principles of non-interference and mutual development, and reflective of diverse civilizational values.

Moving forward, there is a need to deepen South-South cooperation in emerging fields such as digital governance, green technology and public health. Initiatives that promote knowledge exchange, technological innovation and financial inclusion will be essential to create a more balanced and resilient international system. At the same time, there must be continued advocacy for institutional reform, so that bodies such as the UN and the World Bank can better serve the interests of all nations — not just a privileged few.

Eighty years after the defeat of fascism and the founding of the UN, the world finds itself at another historical crossroads. The challenges posed by the "America First" doctrine are testing the resilience of the postwar international order, revealing the fragility of global governance when dominated by narrow self-interest.

Yet they have also galvanized an emerging coalition of nations, led in part by China and the broader Global South, committed to forging a more inclusive and peaceful world. Through sustained cooperation, shared development goals, and a renewed commitment to multilateralism, these nations are offering a credible path forward — one that honors the legacy of the UN and the sacrifices made eight decades ago for a better and more united world.

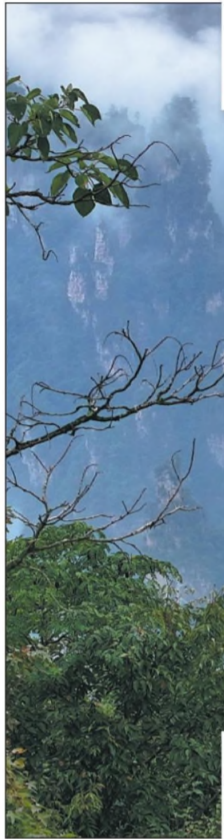
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LIFE

The baby pandas enjoy stepping out at a Chengdu research base, Sichuan province, in January. Pandas are a highlight for Russian tourists. XINHUA



A hot air balloon in picturesque mountains in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on Monday. JIANG KEQING / XINHUA



Above: Mist-shrouded Zhangjiajie in Hunan province. WU YONGBING / XINHUA
Right: Russian tourists enjoy a walk on the Bund in Shanghai. CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA



A cafe in Shexian county, Huangshan city, in Anhui province in March. GUO CHEN / XINHUA

A never-ending book of wonders

An increasing number of Russian tourists crave immersive cultural experiences when visiting China, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

The number of Russian travelers visiting China has not only rebounded from pandemic-era lows but has fundamentally transformed, with tourists increasingly trading organized tours for immersive cultural experiences.

The southern island of Hainan's idyllic tropical climate, breathtaking coastal scenery, high-quality wellness services, and visa-free access have cemented its status as a favorite getaway for Russian travelers.

According to local authorities, Hainan province welcomed 178,000 Russian visitors in 2024, an elevenfold increase compared to the previous year.

But the tourism boom extends far beyond Hainan's shores.

The Association of Tour Operators of Russia reports that 1.8 million Russian visitors made their way to China last year, a 96.5 percent increase year-on-year.

Li Xiaoying has been receiving Russian tourists to China for over

two decades and noticed a significant shift from large, organized tours to independent, culturally immersive trips.

"There has been a 50 percent year-on-year increase in independent Russian travelers, primarily families and small groups of friends," says Li, head of the Beijing Zhentu International Travel Agency's operations in the city's Central Business District.

Before the pandemic, Russian tourists typically arrived in large groups of 15-20 people, sticking to classic itineraries covering Beijing, Shanghai, and Xi'an in Shaanxi province.

Today, they're venturing deeper into China, with Zhangjiajie of Hunan province, Guilin of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, and Huangshan of Anhui province emerging as new hot spots.

"Russian tourists no longer want to just see the Great Wall," Li notes.

"They crave hands-on cultural experiences: writing calligraphy in a Beijing hutong, making dumplings

with locals, or watching intangible cultural heritage performances," she adds.

The number of Russian travelers to China is projected to grow by 20 percent this year, according to Maya Lomidze, executive director of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia.

Recently speaking on a Russian TV program, Lomidze attributes the surge to multiple factors, including restored flight connectivity nearing pre-pandemic levels and low baseline comparisons following COVID-era travel restrictions.

Aviation capacity between the two nations continues to rebound, with at least 170 weekly flights currently operating between Russian and Chinese cities, according to Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency.

For Surana Radnaeva, a Russian entrepreneur and founder of legal consultancy SinoRuss, China is more than a business destination; it's an endless source of surprise and joy. Her most recent trip in February

took her from downtown Beijing's ancient hutong and AI-powered innovations in the capital city's Zhongguancun area to Shanghai's futuristic skyline, with stops to admire Tianjin's architectural wonders.

"China is like a book you can never finish reading," Radnaeva says, adding that it's a sense of harmony that continues to draw her back.

"Where else can you attend morning tai chi sessions in a 600-year-old temple, negotiate deals over AI-powered translation systems at lunch, and ride a 350-kilometer-per-hour train to your next meeting?"

Over the years, Radnaeva has noticed a significant improvement in flights and railways connecting China and Russia.

She's also impressed by the domestic high-speed railway that enables her to enjoy breakfast in Beijing and dinner in Xi'an.

Radnaeva is in the process of writing a book that decodes Chinese business culture for Russians.

"It's important to search for regional specialties, whether Tianjin's fried dough twists or Yunnan province's mushroom hot pot. Food is China's universal language," she recommends to her compatriots.

Radnaeva is looking forward to visiting Xi'an later this year.

"Every Russian knows about the Terracotta Warriors," she says, adding that she will also explore local night markets and Tang Dynasty (618-907) poetry readings.

Irina Antonova, a senior executive at Russian Tour, notes that China's high development rate offers comfortable leisure and travel experiences, which have driven more Russians to explore the country.

"They are interested in seeing China's development," Antonova says.

The profound history of Beijing and Xi'an, the modernity of Shanghai and Hong Kong, beach holidays in Hainan, and pandas in Sichuan province, along with the river and mountain landscapes in Guilin, are among the most popular with Rus-

sian travelers, she observes.

To cater to this demand, Li Xiaoying's agency has developed small-group "culture-plus-scenery" tours, blending sightseeing with activities like tea ceremonies and traditional crafting.

Li owes China's rising popularity with Russian travelers to word-of-mouth recommendations and China's active promotion of tourism in Russia.

"Social media has fueled demand, and every returning traveler becomes an ambassador," Li says.

Destinations like Hunan have also staged multiple tourism events in Russia, which endeared themselves to Russian travelers, she adds.

Li expects sustained growth in high-quality, experience-driven tourism from Russia over the next five years.

"All travel operators need to do is to help them experience China like a local, not just see it," Li says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

French photographer's fascination for Huangshan

HEFEI — At dawn one April day, the summit of the Huangshan Mountain was a world adrift in a swirling sea of clouds and majestic pine trees dotted atop its jagged peaks, as French photographer Nicolas Cornet quickly took photos of the breathtaking scene.

This was Cornet's eighth time at Huangshan Mountain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Anhui province. Every visit, he says, has brought fresh discoveries and renewed inspiration.

The Frenchman's fascination with Huangshan began about a decade ago when he came across photos of the mountain by a Canadian photographer. He was immediately captivated by the mountain's "mysterious landscape" and started planning his own trip there.

In April 2016, Cornet made his

first visit to Huangshan. The moment he set eyes on the gnarly pine trees, grotesque rock formations, and endless sea of clouds, he was hooked.

"I instantly fell in love with the mountains and knew I would be spending a lot of time there photographing them," he says.

That first encounter created a bond that would draw him back to Huangshan seven more times over the following nine years. For Cornet, the mountain never lost its allure as each season and each shift in weather revealed fresh and captivating beauty.

"As a landscape photographer, revisiting the same location under different light and weather conditions is essential to creating unique images," he says.

He adds that one of his most

memorable experiences was seeing the mountain covered in snow. "It felt like walking through a fairy tale. I rushed between photo spots to make the most of the conditions," he says.

Cornet's visits culminated in a black-and-white photo series about the mountain on his photography website. He explains that the choice of style was directly inspired by traditional Chinese ink paintings.

In February this year, Cornet's photographs were exhibited at the Xposure International Photography Festival in the United Arab Emirates. He says that while many visitors had never heard of the mountain before, several began planning trips after seeing his photos.

The photographer says Huang-

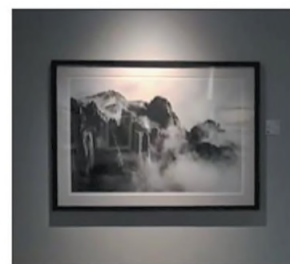
shan has offered him far more than stunning images; it has opened a window on Chinese hospitality.

He says local residents have been very friendly to international tourists like him, and he has built friendships with Chinese photographers.

He says that as Huangshan continues to gain international recognition, services have been improving to accommodate the growing number of overseas visitors. "I've also noticed that some staff at key locations now speak English, which is very helpful," he says.

He also hails China's visa-free entry policies, which made his two most recent trips to Huangshan much easier.

Currently, China grants unilateral visa-free entry to 38 countries, including France, and has extend-



Above: A photo featuring the Huangshan Mountain by French photographer Nicolas Cornet on exhibition in the United Arab Emirates in February. **Right:** Cornet presents another of his works. XINHUA



ed the transit visa-free period to 240 hours for travelers from 54 countries.

Cornet says he expects the relaxed entry policies to attract more international tourists to China.

He is already planning his next trip to Huangshan. With a new

cableway set to open, he says he looks forward to exploring and photographing parts of the mountain that were previously less accessible. "It will open up new creative opportunities for me."

XINHUA

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Stepping into the mythical world of Wukong

Extensively curated exhibition brings IP offscreen with lifelike replicas of its iconic scenes, **Li Yingxue** reports.



Left and far left: Showcasing the successful video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, an art exhibition in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, brings some of the virtual characters to life in physical form.

For fans of the blockbuster action role-playing game *Black Myth: Wukong*, its mythical landscapes, intricate props, and larger-than-life characters have long been familiar, albeit only through a screen. Now, visitors can step into that mythology, literally, until May 21.

At the Art Museum of the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, a stunning exhibition transforms pixels into physical presence. Visitors can walk through life-like recreations of the game's iconic scenes, admire detailed concept art, and even come face-to-face with a life-size replica of the Destined One, a mysterious figure closely linked to Sun Wukong, or Monkey King, the legendary figure from the literary classic *Journey to the West*.

The *Black Myth: Wukong Art Exhibition* isn't just a side event. It's a cultural extension of the game's runaway success, drawing thousands who want to see, touch, and live in the world they've only explored on screens.

Released seven days in advance, tickets are consistently sold out within seconds and many eager fans are staying up late into the night to grab them the moment they go live. Fans also flock to social media platforms like Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, to share strategies for securing a spot.

User "MengmengHao" wrote: "It was unbelievably beautiful and breathtaking; definitely worth staying up until 2 am scrolling on my phone to get tickets. Whether or not you're a gamer, it's worth a visit. You can truly feel the charm of Eastern culture behind the game."

Designed around the game's world, the exhibition aims to dissolve the boundary between digital and physical art. It showcases around 900 items that invite visitors into the creative process, including never-before-seen original artwork, fieldwork photos, character models, statues and a wide range of collectibles.

Shared reminiscence

The exhibition offers more than just spectacle; it's an immersive narrative space and a curated walk through myth, memory and digital artistry.

Curator Xuan Xuejun, deputy dean of the School of Animation and Games at the China Academy of Art, describes it as an interactive retelling of the game's structure, where visitors retrace the Destined One's journey chapter by chapter.

"Many visitors come in groups, often fellow players, who reminisce about their in-game experiences as they view the exhibits. The exhibition becomes a journey of shared memories."

In addition to over 400 pieces of original concept art, the exhibition



The opening ceremony of the *Black Myth: Wukong Art Exhibition* is held at the Art Museum of the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, in April. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Clockwise from left: The *Black Myth* exhibition presents around 900 items, including original artwork, fieldwork photos, character models, statues and a wide range of collectibles.

features more than 200 physical objects, creating a spatially immersive environment.

To deepen the experience, it also introduces meditation zones replicated from the game's slower, contemplative moments.

"The physical meditation experience is very different from in-game meditation," Xuan explains. "In the exhibition space, visitors can sit in front of large screens that randomly display dozens of meditation scenes from the game. It's our way of showing that meditation is also a part of traditional Chinese cultural practices."

The show has drawn a surprisingly wide audience. Families, older visitors and schoolchildren fill the halls, many of whom are unfamiliar with the game but eager to explore its world. Xuan also notes a striking trend — a high proportion of female visitors, far exceeding the game's female player base.

"The game's player base is rela-

tively niche, but the exhibition has proved to be broadly appealing, being intergenerational," he says. "We had entire elementary school classes come. I believe this reflects how games can serve as an entry point for aesthetic education in a museum context."

The exhibition also dives into *Journey to the West* as a long-standing cultural symbol, showcasing everything from Dunhuang murals and 1950s illustrated books to Japanese games and stop-motion animation from *Havoc in Heaven*.

"The aim is to show that *Journey to the West* has long served as a key reference point in both international promotion and the domestic continuity of Chinese culture," Xuan explains. "Whether in the arts or everyday life, this IP remains a powerful cultural presence."

Xu Jiang, vice-chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, echoes this view, noting that the exhibition taps into some-

thing deeply rooted in the Chinese imagination.

"For many Chinese people, their earliest childhood hero is often Sun Wukong, the shape-shifting, cloud-leaping trickster who embodies limitless imagination," Xu says.

"The exhibition feels like a massive game production factory. As visitors move through the space, they come face-to-face with intricate portrayals of humans, gods, demons and monsters, and gain close-up insights into the cultural narratives and technological innovation behind *Black Myth: Wukong*. It's a game-themed journey into the mythology behind the myth."

Changing curriculum

For Xuan and his students, this isn't just an artistic showcase, but a semester-long masterclass in game development, design, and curation.

Riding on the game's breakout success last year, Xuan proposed the idea of an exhibition in October. The

plan was finalized by the end of 2024, and preparations began in earnest before Spring Festival.

Over the following two months, he led a team of graduate students and young faculty to bring the project to life, with close collaboration from the game's Hangzhou-based developer Game Science.

Many of the physical props on display were custom-made by top-tier domestic production companies or Game Science's in-house teams. The production quality far exceeded typical player expectations, Xuan says.

For Xuan, the exhibition is more than a showcase. It's a classroom. "This exhibition is a vivid and dynamic form of practical education," he says. "It was designed to help students gain a deeper understanding of games not just as players, but as future creators."

Established over 20 years ago, the School of Animation and Games, where Xuan works, has long been a pioneer in China's game education.

By involving students in curating the exhibition, the school offers a rare opportunity to explore the gaming industry from the inside — how development teams operate, creative decisions are made, and a game is brought to life from the ground up. "Many students said that working on such a major IP while still in school could have a real impact on their careers," Xuan adds.

The curatorial process itself became a learning experience. "Choosing what to include and what to leave out — that discussion was incredibly valuable," he says. "This exhibition is really about excavating the behind-the-scenes story. Just as a player progresses through the game, we progressed through creating the exhibition."

At the heart of the game is Yang Qi, its art director and cofounder of the China Academy of Art. Yang's journey from oil painting to game development embodies the school's philosophy of integrating artistic, social, and interdisciplinary knowledge.

"Game design is a cross-disciplinary field," Xuan says. "Games can include calligraphy, architecture, Chinese painting, and sculpture. Yang studied oil painting."

For several years, Xuan has invited Yang to the school as a visiting professor, where he shares his experiences with students through intimate talks and workshops.

Yang's return to the classroom reflects the school's larger mission in nurturing creators who understand how to fuse heritage with innovation and art with code.

As one of China's first institutions to establish a game design program — originally founded as the Department of Animation in 2002 — the school continues to align its mission with broader cultural goals.

According to Fang Zhou, deputy director of the academy's publicity department, the program's development mirrors Hangzhou's ambition since 2004 to become an "International Capital of Animation."

"From the start, we aimed to communicate Chinese cultural values, imagine future social possibilities, and expand the boundaries of academic disciplines to nurture globally minded designers who bridge art and technology," Fang says.

In Fang's eyes, Yang's career is a model for the next generation — grounded in tradition, driven by passion, and refined through years of dedicated work.

"He started with Chinese painting, studied oil painting in college, and eventually transitioned into digital art," Fang says. "His story is a perfect example of leveling up in the gaming industry."

Contact the writer at liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn

GUANGZHOU — Buoyed by the international success of China's first 3A video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, domestic game developers are ramping up the global push of their productions, adding a Chinese twist to the worldwide gaming industry.

Before an audience of gamers from across the globe, Chinese game heavyweight TiMi Studio Group launched a charming offensive to pitch its open-world role-playing game *Honor of Kings: World* at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco in March.

Accompanied by the heavy beats of Chinese rap songs, attendees witnessed the game's debut and caught a glimpse of the rich Eastern cultur-

Domestic developers add twist to global gaming

al elements and epic narrative featured in this latest creation.

Apple CEO Tim Cook joined a play-test event in March for *Wuthering Waves*, an open-world RPG launched by Chinese unicorn enterprise Kuro Games. Impressed by the game's unique visuals, character motions, and designs, Cook praised its "incredibly immersive experiences" on his Weibo account.

Since its launch last year, *Wuthering Waves* has seen a solid performance in both domestic and international markets. So far, the

game's global download has exceeded 50 million, claiming spots on bestselling charts in many countries and regions, including Singapore, South Korea and the Philippines.

According to Kuro Games, its fruitful global strategy is driven by cutting-edge technologies and inspired by China's rich heritage. The company collaborates with multiple hardware and chip manufacturers to provide gamers with high-quality experiences.

Thanks to its sophisticated industrial chain and digital infrastructure

for game development in the province, Guangdong's game industry, which accounts for nearly 80 percent of China's total market share, has achieved a total revenue of over 188.6 billion yuan (\$26 billion) overseas in the past five years. To help game enterprises make inroads into overseas markets, Guangdong has streamlined the review, approval and operations process for new games, putting them on a global fast track.

Guangdong's international push of homegrown games epitomizes

the rise of China's gaming industry overseas despite sluggish growth and heightened competition in the world gaming sector.

In the past five years, the total revenue of Chinese game developers in foreign markets has steadily increased above the 100-billion-yuan threshold annually, with a record high of \$18.5 billion in 2024, up 13.39 percent year-on-year.

Citing an industry report, Zheng Nan, a member of the China Audio-video and Digital Publishing Association, says that by 2027, the overseas

revenue of Chinese games will increase to approximately \$39 billion, with the wider application of AI in game production, operation, and customer service.

The rosy prospects are further underpinned by China's unrelenting pursuit of high-level opening-up.

Recently, the State Council approved a work plan to accelerate the launch of comprehensive opening-up programs in the service sector on a trial basis that outlines its efforts to boost the global push for homegrown games and construct a complete industrial chain covering creation, game production, distribution and overseas operation.

LIFE

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Service with a silent smile

Hotpot chain one of many outlets increasingly employing those with hearing impairments, Wang Qian and Shi Baoyin report in Zhengzhou.

From prep cook to kitchen manager, 31-year-old Deng Wei has a long-term goal for a career that one day will help him support his family. Feeling confident and optimistic, the hearing-impaired man earns a monthly income of around 4,000 yuan (\$550.1), and enjoys the quiet environment at work where about half of the 10 staff have similar impairments.

Deng works in Zhengzhou, Henan province, at a branch of a self-service hotpot chain called Shengyousheng that opened in the city last year. The name, which combines *sheng* (more) with *yousheng* (sound), reflects its founder's philosophy: communication is about more than just speech.

Shengyousheng's self-service model minimizes communication, allowing people like Deng to excel. "Our service model creates favorable working conditions for hearing-impaired individuals and helps them integrate without feeling different," 31-year-old branch owner Li Duo says.

"To me, all the staff are the same — people relying on themselves to make a living," he says.

The restaurant makes the most of the self-service dining experience with customers choosing skewers from open refrigerators and mixing their own dipping sauces, minimizing situations that require complex communication.

It incorporates many considerate design elements to improve the communication experience between customers and hearing-impaired employees. Large posters clearly display commonly used gestures, such as the ones for "food" and "thank you", accompanied by simple text annotations. Every table also has prompt cards to help customers communicate.

"We must be patient and give them time. I think they can improve at their jobs. This is not only my belief, but also the philosophy that supports the continued progress of the restaurant," Li says.

The chain began in Shenyang, Liaoning province, about four years ago when the group's founder, Wang Chuang, first envisioned a space where hearing-impaired people could thrive.

Upon hearing about it, Li knew that providing jobs to people with special needs, who were able to make a living for themselves, was exactly what he wanted to do.

To publicize the restaurant, Li opened an account on short-video platform Douyin to document dai-



Left: Prompt cards on the tables are designed to enable easy communication at Shengyousheng Hotpot.



Right: Bai Liping, from Zhoukou, Henan province, has been working in the restaurant for six months. PHOTOS BY QI XIN / CHINA DAILY

ly operations, which gained 484,000 followers and about 1.7 million likes. According to Wang, his chain has hired more than 200 people with hearing impairments over the past four years.

Stepping into the limelight hasn't only increased the number of clients, but also the comments about whether Wang and Li are doing a good thing or simply taking advantage of the hearing-impaired.

Wang remembers two female diners asking him why he hired waiters who couldn't provide quality service. He was offended, but had to smile and apologize to them.

This is not an uncommon situation. Li remembers an incident when a customer wanted cilantro and, unaware that the staff were hearing impaired, asked a nearby server where he could get some.

When the waiter didn't respond, the customer got angry over his "poor" attitude and complained to Li. He calmed the customer and patiently explained the situation until he understood.

Li feels that the hearing-impaired staff sometimes view the restaurant as home, rather than just a workplace. For example,

Deng once noticed that a customer had left a large amount of wasted food on the table and approached them and urged them to finish the food through gestures. Upon seeing this, Li

quickly explained the situation to the customer, avoiding potential conflict.

Deng has reason to cherish his job, and not just because it gives him confidence and respect. His last job was at an electronics factory where people were unfriendly and made fun of him.

For Bai Liping, a 28-year-old hearing-impaired waitress from Zhoukou, Henan, the job has been transformative. After working there for six months, she now handles front-of-house duties with a



Customers enjoy this self-service restaurant's food.

sentence printed on the back of her work shirt reading: "Tap me on the shoulder for help."

"Before, I worked in factories where communication was rare, and my experience working at a milk tea shop was not good because customers would get impatient when I couldn't hear what they wanted," she texts on her phone. "Here, if customers need something, we text or write notes. When they say 'thank you', it feels great."

Customers like 23-year-old Tian

Huaquan barely notice the difference. "It's just a normal restaurant with great food," he says. "If we need extra broth or less spice, we type it out. Honestly, it's fun — like passing notes in class."

Li isn't content with staying in Zhengzhou. With a growing following on social media, he plans to open restaurants in Luoyang and Kaifeng, two other cities in Henan, where he plans to replicate the model.

China has an estimated 70 million people with moderate to complete hearing loss, which accounts for 5.17 percent of the population, according to data about hearing impairment issues. Authorities, nongovernmental organizations, enterprises and individuals like Li have worked to improve inclusion for those with hearing loss.

There have been reports of bakeries, cafeterias and restaurants hiring the hearing-impaired, and thanks to the internet, they have more career options, like becoming livestreamers and working in deliveries.

"Hearing-impaired employees don't need charity — they're talented workers," Li says. "This isn't just about business, it's about changing mindsets."

Qi Xin contributed to this story.

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The long ride to letting go

The moment the subway doors slid open, I was hit by quiet disappointment. The carriage was already full — every seat claimed, bodies swaying in practiced stillness. It was frustrating, especially since I had made a point of getting up early to conduct a long-distance interview.

This journey would take 50 minutes, half an hour longer than my usual commute, and I had envisioned using the time productively. As I stepped onto the train, I scanned the cabin for telltale signs of imminent departure: a raised head checking the map, a hand reaching for a bag, knees bouncing in anticipation.

Nothing. No hints. No hope. By default, I stationed myself near two girls sitting close to the door. Stylish and relaxed, they were scrolling through their phones, whispering and giggling over snippets of gossip that fluttered above the rumble of the train.

They looked, to me, like they might hop off after a stop or two, on their way to a cafe or a shopping center.

But five stations passed, and they remained planted — locked in chitchat. Meanwhile, the train grew more crowded, and people who had boarded after me began slipping into newly vacated seats, guided by what felt like some invisible force of wisdom and timing. I stayed where I was, trapped by my misguided gamble.

As the train rattled on, regret curled inside. My arm ached from holding the pole and my legs throbbled in protest. But more painful than the physical discomfort were the simmering irritation at myself and the voice in my head that kept muttering: "This isn't how it was supposed to go."

I had it all planned out — grab a seat early, settle in, and finish the last bit of a story I was working on. There was no looming deadline, just the quiet satisfaction of using time well. But now, all I had was this inner churn of annoyance.

Then, halfway through the journey, the train doors opened again, and a middle-aged man stepped in, holding a dark cane. He wobbled slightly with the train's motion, clearly visually impaired.

And in that moment, something remarkable happened. A young man — someone I had been silently envying for snagging a seat three stations earlier — stood up without hesitation. He gently tapped the blind man's shoulder, guided him to the seat, and stood back with quiet composure.

It wasn't performative, but instinctive — decent and generous. And just like that, something cracked open inside me.

I had spent half an hour fuming over the lack of a seat, fixated on what I didn't have. But I wasn't actually trapped. I had stood for others before — pregnant women, the elderly, parents with toddlers.

As I did some soul-searching as to why this had gotten under my skin, I realized it was the script in my mind: the expectation that if I played the game right — got up early, calculated smartly, positioned myself well — I'd be rewarded.

Maybe deep in my mind, I assumed the seat wasn't just a place to sit; it was proof that the universe was cooperating with my plans.

But I know life doesn't run on personal scripts. It moves to its own rhythm, indifferent to our calculations. The passengers who found seats after me weren't necessarily lucky; they were simply unattached to expectations.

Seats opened up during the final leg of my journey, but I didn't take them. I didn't need to. I was already standing with a quiet realization that had dissolved my earlier grievance.

I stepped off the train that day with a lighter, clearer mind. What I thought was wasted time had become an unexpected lesson — a nudge toward presence, humility, and gratitude. I saw how easily we waste our mental energy clinging to imagined entitlements and obsessing over small comforts.

In chasing a seat, I nearly missed the gift of stillness, perspective, and an unplanned moment of clarity.

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Appetite for virtual guides giving real experiences continues to grow

TAIYUAN — Wu Hongbo, a visitor from Dalian, Liaoning province, recently used artificial intelligence to plan a detailed tour of Shanxi, a province in northern China known for its cultural heritage.

By entering his destinations, travel dates, budget, and personal interests into an AI application, he received a personalized weeklong travel itinerary. With a detailed plan covering transportation, attractions, and accommodation, he embarked on a more convenient and efficient AI-powered journey across a province that was completely unknown to him.

An avid fan of martial arts novels, Wu has long held a fascination for the Yanmen Pass — a famous section of the Great Wall often mentioned in his favorite stories — and was determined to visit during his trip.

As it was his first visit to Shanxi, he felt that joining a tour group would not only be too expensive, but also lack the flexibility he wanted. Faced with many attractions and complicated travel routes, Wu turned to AI for assistance.

The guide included major sites such as the Yungang Grottoes, the Wooden Pagoda of Yingxian county, and Wu's personal favorite, Yanmen Pass. Based on his interest in ancient architecture and food, the AI app also recommended several lesser-known yet culturally rich

attractions and delicacies.

"This AI-planned tour has truly provided me with unexpected surprises," Wu says. "The recommended attractions and routes perfectly matched my taste, giving me a deeper understanding of Shanxi."

During the May Day holiday, China's tourism market saw a significant surge. The Ministry of Transport estimated that on the first day of the holiday, the number of passenger trips exceeded 340 million, marking an 8-percent increase year-on-year. This trend reflects a growing optimism in the tourism sector, with both domestic and outbound tourism experiencing robust growth.

As travelers seek more immersive and personalized experiences, AI's role as cyber tour guide has not only improved the efficiency and quality of travel, but also introduced a new level of intelligence to trip planning.

On social media platforms, content such as "DeepSeek's customized five-day four-night Shandong travel plan" and "Two-day AI-generated Chengde itinerary" is becoming increasingly common.

Industry analysts believe that 2025 will be the breakout year for AI tour guides. With the spread of 5G and digital technologies, immersive experiences will become mainstream.

During a trip, AI can also pro-



Labor Day holiday tourists enjoy an ethnic folk dance performance in Tuyugou village, a historical cultural village and popular tourist destination in Shanshan county, Turpan, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, early this month. WANG FEI / XINHUA

vide real-time services. Through voice recognition and precise positioning technology, it can act like a personal guide, providing detailed explanations of the history, cultural connotations, and features of attractions.

Liu Xilin, a visitor from Hebei, did not hire a human tour guide when he visited Jinci Temple in Taiyuan. Instead, he used Doubao, ByteDance's AI-powered chatbot, to thoroughly prepare for his visit.

"I learned a lot about the background of the temple, as well as its

architectural features and cultural value," Liu says.

As the AI trend gains momentum around the country, major scenic spots are accelerating technological upgrades.

Popular tourist destinations like Huangshan Mountain in Anhui province, Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi province, and the Wushan scenic area in Chongqing have also integrated DeepSeek to enhance smart interactions and provide a more personalized visitor experience.

XINHUA

Boom time

Livestreaming generates jobs, engages users in e-commerce
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Treasures of the past

History lover immortalizes heritage with words, photos
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025

Wave of fire



A fire truck sprays water to halt advancing flames during a forest fire in the Turkmen Mountain in Syria's coastal Latakia Province on Sunday. The blaze, which erupted on Wednesday, has scorched more than 30 hectares of land. No casualties or structural damage have been reported. SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY / AFP

China and US agree to ease trade tensions

Analysts, exporters call move a positive step for world economy amid uncertainty

By WANG YU and ZHONG NAN

China and the United States announced a series of tariff adjustment measures on Monday aimed at easing trade tensions between the world's two largest economies, according to a joint statement issued by both governments in Geneva, Switzerland.

Trade analysts and exporters described the move as a positive step for the global economy, providing much-needed stability amid ongoing uncertainty.

The announcement came after a high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs held on Saturday and Sunday in Geneva. The two sides acknowledged the critical role of their bilateral trade relationship in supporting the economies of both countries and the broader global economy.

The US agreed to remove 91 percentage points in the additional tariffs it had imposed on China, while China correspondingly would remove 91 percentage points in its additional tariffs on the US. In addition, the US will place a 90-day pause on 24 percentage points of the rate of additional ad valorem duties — tariffs levied in proportion to the value of goods — on Chinese imports, and China will accordingly place a 90-day pause on 24 per-

centage points of its modified additional ad valorem rates of duty for imports from the US.

In the joint statement, the two sides commit to taking the actions by Wednesday and say they will establish a mechanism to continue discussions about economic and trade relations.

Frederic Neumann, chief Asia economist at HSBC Global Research, said that investors are breathing a sigh of relief as trade tensions between the US and China are easing. The reduction in tariffs, even if temporary, will offer major relief to exporters both in China and the US, he said.

A spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said that the high-level economic and trade talks between China and the US achieved substantial progress by significantly reducing bilateral tariff levels, which meets the expectations of manufacturers and consumers in both countries and is in line with the interests of both nations and the broader global community.

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Envoy calls for strengthening Sino-LAC solidarity

By ZHAO JIA and LI PEIXUAN

As the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum is set to open in Beijing on Tuesday, expectations are running high for a new chapter in China-LAC relations, said Fernando Lugris, Uruguay's ambassador to China.

He expressed the hope for closer cooperation and stronger solidarity to tackle shared challenges and unlock new development opportunities.

"We visualize the cooperation between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries as a comprehensive strategic partnership with many different areas that we have been working on," said Lugris, who is also dean of the Diplomatic Corps of Latin American and Caribbean Countries in China.

Over the past decade, the China-CELAC Forum has evolved into a vital platform for dialogue, development and strategic coordination, he noted, adding that it has fostered deeper mutual understanding and produced tangible outcomes across the region.

China and CELAC member states have entered a new stage marked by equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and tangible benefits for the people.

In a congratulatory letter to the 9th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in



Fernando Lugris

early April, President Xi Jinping welcomed all CELAC member states to attend the upcoming fourth ministerial meeting in China to discuss ways to foster development and promote cooperation, and jointly contribute wisdom and strength to addressing global challenges, advancing global governance reform and safeguarding world peace and stability.

Lugris said, "We are very hopeful to see a very fruitful meeting that could reach agreements and consensus in order to project our cooperation for the next 10 years." He also expressed confidence that new areas of collaboration will be identified and expanded under the framework of the forum.

The forum has established several mechanisms — such as the ministerial meeting, dialogue of foreign ministers of China and the Quartet of CELAC and the meeting of national coordinators — to build a comprehensive network between both sides. The CELAC Quartet comprises the current rotating chair of CELAC, its previous rotating chair and its next rotating chair, as well as the current rotating chair of the Caribbean Community.

In recent years, China-LAC cooperation has steadily deepened in both quality and scope, extending

into areas such as technological innovation and green development.

China is the second-largest trading partner of the Latin American and Caribbean community, while the region is the second-largest destination for Chinese overseas investment.

Uruguay, in particular, has been a key beneficiary of this partnership, Lugris noted.

"Uruguay has implemented many programs under the framework of the forum," he said, citing initiatives such as expanded scholarship opportunities for Uruguayan students in China, joint development projects, increased exchanges between political parties and think tanks, and growing trade ties.

"In the past decade, we have doubled our exports to China," Lugris said. "That is clearly an indication that China has truly opened its market to more Uruguayan products."

Amid rising unilateralism and protectionism, Lugris emphasized the forum's increasing importance in promoting experience-sharing and mutual understanding.

"The forum opens up doors for more exchange of experiences between the region and China," he said, adding that he expects robust discussions at the meeting.

Citing shared values such as upholding multilateralism and defending free trade, Lugris called for continued joint efforts to promote free trade.

"China has a very clear position in pushing for more active work at the

World Trade Organization and continuing to negotiate free trade agreements with many countries around the world," he said.

China has signed free trade agreements with five LAC countries — Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Nicaragua — and negotiations for similar agreements with Honduras and El Salvador are progressing in an orderly manner.

Despite what he described as "very severe" global circumstances, Lugris expressed strong confidence in China's economic outlook, noting that a healthy Chinese economy sends a positive signal not just to its citizens, but also to the world.

"There has been an incredible modernization of the Chinese economy in the past decades, with a lot of efforts in science and technology," he said, pointing to visible changes in daily life such as mobile payments, electric vehicles and other innovations that often surprise foreign visitors.

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Online See more by scanning the code.

NEW STEALTH FIGHTER JET TO PLAY 'CRUCIAL ROLE' IN NATION'S DEFENSE

Project leader of J-35A says aircraft will detect 'hostile objects', strengthen network

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn



China's new stealth fighter jet, the J-35A, will play a major role in the country's air defense network in a "coordinator" or "organizer" role, and extensively strengthen the system's operational capability, according to its project leader.

Wang Yongqing, the J-35A's chief researcher at Aviation Industry Corp of China's Shenyang Aircraft

Design and Research Institute, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily that the radar-evading combat plane was created to act as the backbone of the People's Liberation Army Air Force's efforts to neutralize high-level threats, especially hostile stealth aircraft.

Moreover, the J-35A is also needed by the Air Force to establish a "considerable scale" fleet of affordable and powerful stealth jets, he said at the institute's headquarters in Shenyang, Liaoning province.

"Our adversaries will definitely use their stealth aircraft or low-observable cruise missiles to penetrate our air defense networks," Wang said.

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Hong Kong's key position in a changing global order

The trade disputes between China and the United States, often framed in terms of risk, also present a historic and strategic opportunity for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Rather than retreat in the face of geopolitical uncertainty, the SAR should embrace its evolving role — not just as a gateway between China and the rest of the world, but as the premier financial center for the next generation of emerging markets.

An immediate opportunity lies in the potential shift of Chinese companies away from US stock exchanges. Over the past two decades, many of China's best-known firms — Alibaba, JD, Baidu, and others — chose to list in New York to access the world's deepest pools of capital. But times are changing. With intensifying scrutiny from US

WORLD WATCH

By Leonid Mironov

regulators, the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act, and growing restrictions on Chinese investment, the US risks surrendering one of its significant competitive advantages — openness.

For the past 15 years, US dominance in global equity flows was built not only on the depth and liquidity of its markets but on a reputation for being open to foreign issuers and investors alike. Now, as Washington prioritizes national security over market openness, a vacuum is emerging — and Hong Kong is uniquely positioned to fill it.

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Continuing help



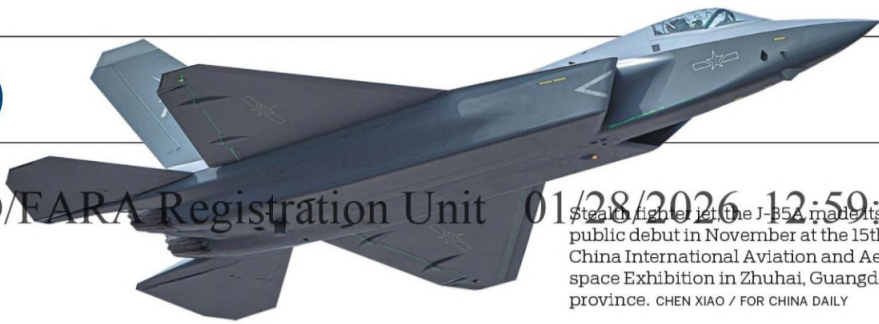
Members of a Chinese health team visit and survey on Friday a temporary settlement for earthquake victims in Mandalay, Myanmar. The 50-member team arrived in the Southeast Asian country on April 19 to support local health prevention and control efforts following the deadly quake. MIAO JUESUO / XINHUA

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PAGE TWO



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“And if those hostile craft succeed in infiltrating our defense lines, they will outperform our conventional countermeasures in terms of detection capability and range, which means they can spot us from hundreds of kilometers away but at the same time we can't find them. That means our defense units will not be able to survive such an encounter.”

Wang said the defense network needs a plane that can “see” hostile objects and track and intercept them. More importantly, the J-35A will empower and coordinate other assets in the network.

“It can lock on the targets, share the targets' position with other weapon systems, such as surface-to-air missiles, and even use its own radar to guide other weapons to bring the targets down. This is called ‘systems coordination’ or ‘multi-domain coordination,’” he explained.

The Shenyang institute is China's first aircraft design organization and also one of the only two Chinese research bodies capable of designing manned fighter jets. It is known for developing a number of combat planes that have been widely deployed in the Chinese military such as the J-8 and J-11B, as well as the J-15, the country's first carrier-borne fighter jet.

China Daily's interview with Wang, one of AVIC's top jet designers, was the first time he has elaborated on the J-35A's functions in an air-defense system.

The country's newest type of stealth fighter jet, the J-35A made its public debut in November at the 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, shortly after it was declassified by the Air Force.

Its overall design is based on the J-35, a stealth naval fighter developed for deployment in the near future on the PLA Navy's aircraft carriers and for cooperation with the J-15 in carrier-based air operations.

China will become the second nation after the United States to have two families of stealth fighter jets in active service after they are commissioned.

Currently, the PLA Air Force has deployed a large fleet of J-20 heavy-duty stealth combat aircraft, that went into commission in late 2016. The J-20's basic configuration has evolved into several variants including a twin-seat version.

Aeronautical aspiration

In his four decades at AVIC, the country's dominant aircraft maker, Wang has mostly kept a low-profile although he is the chief designer of several models of supersonic combat jets.

Born in February 1965 to a farming family in Dehui, Jilin province, Wang was one of the first among his contemporaries to see a plane in person. This was because his home and primary school were near an Air Force aircraft repair workshop.

“I would often see planes in the skies,” he recalled. “I also heard many of my classmates talking about how their parents repaired planes at work. This was one reason that led to my interest in aircraft.”

As a young boy, witnessing air defense measures at home and other places he asked his parents about them, and they told him about the “menace from the skies.” “I gradually learned about the power of aircraft and consequently developed a personal interest in them,” he said.

At the age of 17, Wang needed to select a university and major before the national college entrance examination that summer. He decided to study aircraft design at the Beijing Institute of Aeronautics, now known as Beihang University.

“I thought carefully and considered several factors,” he said.

“First, I wished to study in Beijing. Second, I was sure that designing aircraft was what I wanted to do. And finally, considering my scores, the Beijing Institute of Aeronautics was not too difficult for me to apply to,” he recalled.

After four years, he graduated in 1986 with a bachelor's degree and was immediately assigned to the Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute, which was part of the then Ministry of Aviation Industry. With five other graduates, he was assigned to the general design team.

Even after 39 years, the memory of his first day at the institute still lives vividly in his mind.

“I remember clearly that the team's deputy chief said to me, ‘Wang, please check this bomb manual and draw an outline of this

Design expert: Building world-class fighter jets

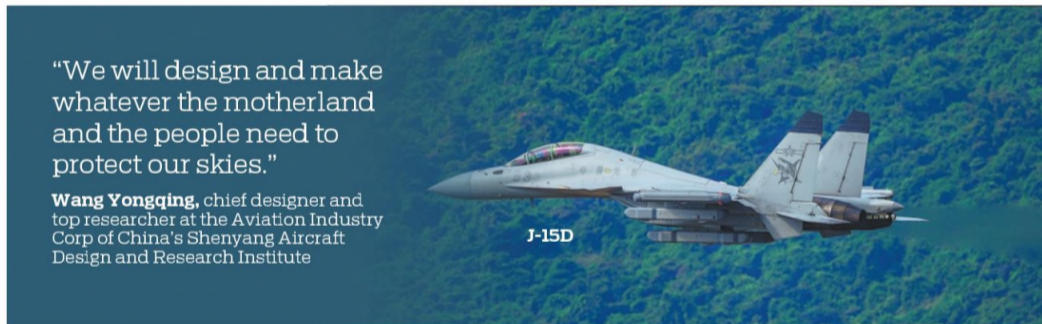


A J-15, China's first carrier-borne fighter jet, prepares to take off from the aircraft carrier *Shandong* in April, 2023.

LI JINGHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Wang Yongqing, chief designer and top researcher at the Aviation Industry Corp of China's Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute, during work. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



“We will design and make whatever the motherland and the people need to protect our skies.”

Wang Yongqing, chief designer and top researcher at the Aviation Industry Corp of China's Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute

type of bomb'. There were only vague pictures and some basic parameters in that manual, so I had to figure out how to make that outline with the resources available to me,” he said.

“That was not easy, but I came to realize it was actually good homework for entry-level engineers like me to learn how to overcome difficulties and make things right,” Wang said.

It was not long before he started to be given important tasks.

In the winter of 1986, Wang was sent to temporarily assist a senior designer at the institute who was responsible for researching the feasibility of a spaceplane. He displayed good skills and impressed the designer, who asked for the young man's formal transfer to the team.

In the spring of 1987, the second year of Wang's career at the institute, he was named leader of the spaceplane's pre-research team. He worked on the

project until the early 1990s when a spaceplane was found to be far beyond China's technological and technical capabilities at the time.

Carrier-borne jet

After returning to the general design team, Wang was mainly tasked with making plans and conducting pre-research for next-generation fighter jets.

“I participated in the research and development of some upgraded variants of old aircraft types. But my major duties were related to the conceptual research of my institute's next-generation products: a carrier-borne fighter jet and a fifth-generation combat plane,” he said, adding preliminary research of

both types had started one by one.

As the research advanced and the teams became bigger, Wang became a competent, successful team leader and moved up through the ranks. In his late 30s, he was promoted to deputy chief designer at the institute.

Both the fifth-generation and carrier-borne jets were new and quite challenging to Chinese aviation designers at the time, and it was understandable that Wang soon found he was too busy to oversee both projects.

He was asked to make a choice and decided to focus all of his attention on the carrier-borne fighter jet that was later named the J-15 and is now the spearhead of China's carrier strike groups.

Wang said he found designing a carrier-borne jet to be more challenging and intriguing. “So many technologies and components were new to me,

and a lot of operational patterns (of carrier-borne jets) were totally different from those used by land-based planes. Designing such a jet was so much fun!” he said.

Wang was appointed executive deputy chief designer of the J-15, which exposed him to a long list of challenges and difficulties. Almost at the same time, he was promoted to the institute's chief designer.

Developing blueprints

Facing technological and engineering challenges and a tight schedule, Wang organized his fellow researchers to deal with problems one by one. Every member of the J-15 project team raced against time and tried their utmost to do their job, hoping to deliver the best results, he said.

“At our busiest time, we arranged as many as 25 workshops in a single month to gather knowledge and experience to help us solve difficulties,” he recalled, adding that their efforts paid off as the engineers conquered all obstacles and mastered crucial technologies.

An integrated team and new mechanisms were established to streamline and optimize coordination among different units, and send digital blueprints to the aircraft factory.

The J-15 project allowed them to apply and test the new mechanisms, which were found to be very useful, Wang said.

“When my designers sent the first digital blueprints of the J-15 to the factory, its managers said they had difficulties using those blueprints because their workers didn't know how to read them,” he said.

“But via the J-15 project, they started to get used to the new blueprints and found them more convenient and efficient than printed drawings. After the J-15 (project), the factory's managers asked us to use digital blueprints for all of the next aircraft models,” Wang said.

Due to their endeavor and dedication, the J-15 was delivered to the Navy on schedule, allowing naval aviators to train for carrier-based operations in real aircraft.

In November 2012, pilot Dai Mingmeng landed a J-15 on the *CNS Liaoning*, China's first aircraft carrier, and then took off from the vessel. It was the first time a Chinese fighter jet had operated from a carrier.

The J-15 has since been developed into several variants and deployed in many long-range operations of China's carrier strike force.

Strive for excellence

Wang was later appointed chief researcher of the J-16 multi-role strike plane and its electronic-warfare variant. Under his leadership, designers gave the J-16 series strong capabilities, making the aircraft a new pillar of the Air Force's airstrike system.

As the chief designer of a combat plane, he believes the most important aspect is to know clearly what pilots and their commanders truly need.

Gu Songfen is a preeminent aircraft designer who worked for decades at the Shenyang institute. He is one of a handful of recipients of the nation's highest science and technology award.

Wang said Gu once told him and other chief designers that they must make friends with front-line pilots to hear what they want and their advice. “He said, ‘It is the aviators, not you, that really know whether your aircraft perform well or poorly in the skies,’” Wang said, adding that he usually pays several visits to military units each year to talk with pilots to solicit their suggestions.

Currently, most of Wang's attention is focused on flight tests and improvement of the J-35A.

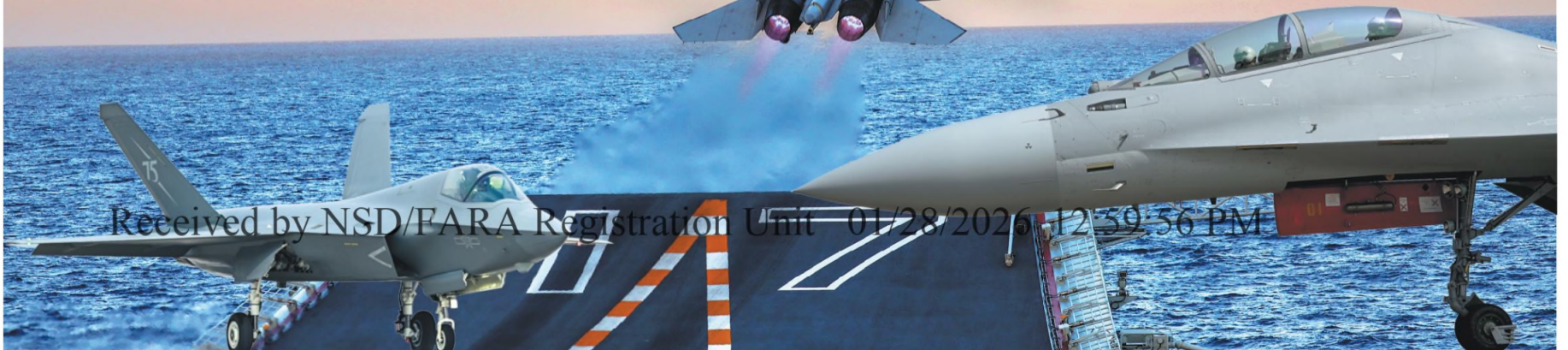
Besides the design work, he also tutors doctoral students at the institute. He often tells the students that as an aircraft researcher, “you must have craftsmanship and always strive for excellence and perfection.”

Looking to the future, Wang said he is confident that the Chinese aviation industry will continue building world-class combat aircraft for the PLA.

“We will design and make whatever the motherland and the people need to protect our skies,” he stressed.

In recognition of Wang's service and contributions, the government has conferred a number of honorary titles and awards on him, ranging from the model worker's medal to one of the country's top sci-tech awards.

His only child, a son, also studied aircraft design at Beihang University, and now works at a Shanghai-based institute of the Commercial Aircraft Corp of China.



Left and right: The J-35A (left) and the J-16 (right), both involve Wang's research work. CHEN XIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY; YU HONGCHUN / XINHUA Center: The J-15 takes off from the aircraft carrier *Shandong*. LI JINGHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

TOP NEWS

Nation strengthens control over strategic mineral flows

By WANG KEJU
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China has announced that it will strengthen control over the export of strategic minerals "every step of the way", with a particular focus on cracking down on the smuggling of these critical resources and enhancing customs inspections at ports.

All departments and local authorities should intensify the tracking of strategic mineral flows, enhance interagency information sharing and implement early warning mechanisms, in order to prevent the illegal outflow of these vital resources, according to a high-level interdepartmental meeting held on Monday.

In the wake of the implementation of curbs since December on certain strategic minerals exported to the United States, China has uncovered instances of collusion between overseas entities and illicit domestic actors seeking to circumvent regula-

tory measures through smuggling and other illegal means.

The tightening of regulations on strategic mineral exports is a critical imperative, as these resources are intrinsically linked to China's national security and development interests, it was emphasized at the meeting, which was led by the national export control work coordination office.

From mining and smelting to transportation, manufacturing and ultimately exporting, government agencies should work closely to ensure that each stage of the supply chain is subject to rigorous supervision and management, according to the meeting.

On Friday, the office convened another meeting to underscore the need to combat smuggling of critical resources.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce said on Monday that relevant authorities "have taken swift actions targeting fraudulent report-

ing, smuggling, third-country transshipments and other illegal activities aimed at circumventing China's strategic mineral export controls."

By launching an interdepartmental investigation, implementing more rigorous port inspections and uncovering the illicit networks and entities behind these schemes, China will firmly safeguard its national security, the spokesperson said, adding that more crackdowns should be expected.

In December, the ministry announced the implementation of strict controls on a range of dual-use items and chemical elements exported to the US, including gallium, germanium, antimony, superhard materials and graphite. It expanded the export control list in February to include tungsten, tellurium, bismuth, molybdenum and indium.

According to data released by the General Administration of Customs, China's exports of antimony and germanium have declined by 57 per-

cent and 39 percent, respectively, in the first quarter compared with the same period last year.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that illicit actors, driven by the pursuit of exorbitant profits, are not only undermining China's legal framework but also posing a substantial challenge to its implementation of the strategic mineral export control system.

Strategic minerals are of paramount importance to China's national security, and the government is making targeted efforts to combat smuggling to also safeguard the country's economic and industrial security, Zhou said.

"It is important to clarify that the measures are focused on curbing unlawful practices, such as smuggling, and not on impeding the lawful trade and utilization of these strategic mineral resources," he added.

Lula praises cooperation with Beijing

China welcomes efforts of Brazilian firms in exploring, engaging with Chinese market

By ZHOU JIN
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In the face of rising global protectionism, Brazil is committed to removing trade barriers and providing more convenience for mutually beneficial cooperation with China, visiting Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Monday.

As strategic partners, Brazil and China are important players on the international stage, Lula said at the closing ceremony of a business seminar in Beijing, adding that through joint efforts the two sides can demonstrate to the world that cooperation is the right path amid global challenges.

Cooperation between Brazil and China is unbreakable, and the two countries need each other, he said, adding that by working together, the two countries can ensure that the Global South earns the world's respect.

Lula, who began a five-day state visit to China on Saturday, is accompanied by a delegation that includes a large number of ministers, governors and members of parliament, as well as more than 200 entrepreneurs, according to Brazilian media.

The Brazilian president expressed opposition to the sweeping tariffs imposed worldwide by the United States, stressing that multilateralism, rather than protectionism, is the key to development.

History has shown time and again that trade protectionism leads to conflict, he said, noting that by upholding multilateralism, the free trade system can be safeguarded.

Brazil is now taking another solid step forward in promoting cooperation with China, he said, adding that this has also created more opportunities for investment as well as economic and trade development.

Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in this regard, he said, adding that their role is indispensable in building new value chains, advancing the transition to a low-carbon economy and deepening scientific and technological cooperation.

Gao Yunlong, vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Con-

sultative Conference, the nation's top political advisory body, said that China looks forward to active efforts by Brazilian enterprises in exploring and deeply engaging with the Chinese market.

China is willing to actively explore ways to provide facilitation in areas such as visas, financing and the business environment for entrepreneurs from around the world, including Brazil, he said.

China has been Brazil's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years. Bilateral trade has grown from \$12.36 billion in 2004 to \$188.17 billion in 2024, a more than fifteenfold increase, according to Fang Aiqing, chairman of the China Council for International Investment Promotion.

China is also a major source of foreign direct investment in Brazil, with cumulative investment in recent years exceeding \$70 billion.

Investment cooperation between the two countries has expanded from traditional sectors such as energy, electricity, infrastructure and manufacturing to emerging industries, including new energy, the digital economy, financial services and biomedicine.

Frederico Siqueira, Brazil's minister of communications, said that Brazil is willing to establish partnerships to introduce advanced and cutting-edge technologies, including satellite and fiber-optic technologies. Brazil is committed to ensuring a safe business environment and a sound legislative framework, he added.

Fabiana Tomaz of Cortex, a Brazilian real estate asset management company, said she believes that Brazil-China business cooperation is at a historic turning point.

She said her company is seeking Chinese investment as it aims to build a Chinese culture-themed commercial center in Brazil.

There are many dedicated professionals who are eager to provide services for business cooperation between the two countries, and there is a strong desire to make interactions more convenient, she said.

Fastest chariot first



Jockeys push their horses to the limit during a harness racing event on Saturday in York, the United Kingdom. LEE SMITH / REUTERS

Talks: Vice-premier calls for safeguarding multilateralism

From page 1

China hopes that the US will continue to work with China, move in the same direction, fully rectify its erroneous practice of imposing unilateral tariffs, and further strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation, according to the spokesperson.

China saw its trade with the US, its third-largest trading partner, decline 2.1 percent year-on-year to 1.44 trillion yuan (\$199.9 billion) in the first four months of 2025, according to the latest data from the General Administration of Customs.

Mei Xinyu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said that for the next step, it is vital for China and the US to work together to further remove the remaining additional tariffs on both sides, as the tariffs continue to

impose unnecessary burdens on businesses and consumers, and disrupt global supply chains.

Qi Mingwen, president of Zhejiang Shuoqi Home Textile Products, said that with the latest tariff adjustments, Chinese exporters can now allocate more resources to innovation and market expansion.

The company, based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, is a major electric blanket manufacturer. It exported 460 million yuan worth of products to the US in 2024, according to data from Ningbo Customs.

"Looking ahead, we will continue to monitor the upcoming China-US economic and tariff talks, respond proactively to potential changes and seize growth opportunities," said Qi.

Ying Pinguang, dean of Shanghai University of International Business and Economics' School of Global

Governance, said, "China and its exporters will closely watch US actions in the next phase, particularly whether it delivers on concrete steps regarding key issues such as tariffs and export controls."

During a meeting on Sunday with World Trade Organization Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in Geneva, Vice-Premier He Lifeng stressed that all parties should resolve differences and disputes through equal dialogue under the framework of the WTO, jointly safeguard multilateralism and free trade, and promote the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Chinese stocks closed higher on Monday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rising 0.82 percent to 3,369.24 points, while the Shenzhen Component Index gained 1.72 percent to close at 10,301.16 points.

Noting that the trade tensions between China and the US have caused a profound impact on the global economic order, Willie Tan, CEO of China, South Korea and Southeast Asia at Skechers, a US-based athleisure company, said the advantages of China-US cooperation significantly outweigh any disadvantages.

Tan said that the group achieved record global sales revenue of \$8.97 billion in 2024, with China standing out as its largest overseas market. As a key growth engine, the Chinese market will play a pivotal role in supporting the company's goal of reaching \$10 billion in global sales by 2026.

Liu Zhijia contributed to this story.

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Spectacle in the air



People watch aircraft of the Mexican Air Force on Sunday during an air show in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The show included aircraft performance, parachuting and interaction with the armed forces. JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ / REUTERS

SAR: Hong Kong's role as clearing, settlement hub to grow

From page 1

Already, companies such as Alibaba, JD and NetEase have completed secondary listings on the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing. Should US delisting accelerate, Hong Kong stands ready to absorb a new wave of high-quality Chinese issuers. With reforms allowing dual-class shares, biotech listings and pre-revenue tech companies, Hong Kong's capital markets have proven to be nimble and adaptive. With the central government's continued policy support, the SAR can evolve into the natural home for China's global champions.

But the opportunity runs far deeper than accommodating returning Chinese listings.

Hong Kong can redefine itself as the financial artery of the Belt and Road Initiative. As Chinese companies expand their infrastructure, energy and digital connectivity across Asia, Africa and the Middle East, they require world-class financing, insurance, legal services, and dispute resolution — all of which Hong Kong is well-positioned to provide. Projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Laos' high-speed railway and ports in East Africa show the scale of China's engagement abroad.

Hong Kong can serve as the operational and financial headquarters for these massive, complex projects.

Moreover, Hong Kong should actively welcome companies from BRI partner nations to list and raise capital. Many fast-growing firms in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa struggle to access deep capital markets that offer international visibility. By providing these companies a trusted, efficient listing platform, with the advantages of Hong Kong's legal system, regulatory transparency and international investor base, Hong Kong can become the preferred capital-raising center for the Global South.

In the fixed income space, the expansion of "dim sum" bonds — offshore renminbi-denominated debt — offers another dimension of growth. Sovereigns and corporates from BRI countries could issue bonds in Hong Kong, accessing Chinese liquidity and diversifying their investor base. Hong Kong's Bond Connect program, now synchronized with the Southbound link, can be further expanded to support greater cross-border financing activity.

Finally, as the RMB's internationalization accelerates, Hong Kong is poised to remain the leading offshore RMB center. Today, the city handles about 80 percent of all off-

shore RMB settlements. With trade between China and BRI countries increasingly conducted in RMB, Hong Kong's importance as a clearing and settlement hub will only grow. It is not just about facilitating transactions — it is about anchoring the broader ecosystem of trade, finance and investment flows centered around China's evolving role in the global economy.

The opportunity before Hong Kong is historic. It demands vision, proactive leadership, and, crucially, the unwavering support of the central government to ensure that Hong Kong continues to thrive under the "one country, two systems" framework. In a world being reshaped by fragmentation and new alignments, Hong Kong can stand as a beacon of connectivity,

innovation and openness.

As a Chinese saying reminds us, "Within every crisis lies a new opportunity; within every disruption, a new chapter can be opened." The world is changing. The era when global finance flowed effortlessly to New York and London is giving way to a multipolar reality. Hong Kong, if it acts decisively, has a once-in-a-generation chance to shape the future of global capital flows — and its own destiny.

The author is a research lead and co-manager at a Hong Kong-based asset manager, Pacat Capital Management. He is also the publisher of Panda Perspectives, a research publication on the greater China market and economy. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Roses from everywhere

A child poses with a painting decorated with roses at the IX International Symposium on Rose Research and Cultivation in Beijing's Mentougou district on Sunday. The event, being held from Saturday to Thursday, showcases over a thousand rose varieties from around the world, and also includes international academic discussions on roses.

FU DING / FOR CHINA DAILY



China, Brazil boost agricultural trade

By ZHAO YIMENG
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China and Brazil will strengthen cooperation in agricultural trade and technology exchange in response to new tariff measures imposed by the United States, Paulo Teixeira, Brazil's Minister of Agrarian Development and Family Farming, said on Monday.

Teixeira said China is the largest buyer of Brazilian agricultural products, with imports reaching \$49 billion last year. Meanwhile, Brazil is also a major importer of Chinese agricultural products, as both countries continue to deepen trade and technological cooperation in the sector.

Brazil is home to about 5 million smallholder farming families who produce roughly 70 percent of the country's food supply.

"While large-scale agriculture in Brazil is highly mechanized and technologically advanced, small-scale farms still face low levels of mechanization," Teixeira said.

To bridge the gap, Brazil has introduced a series of incentives to attract foreign investment, particularly from China. The measures include tariff exemptions for up to 12 months on capital goods, and information and technology goods, he said.

Teixeira added that the Brazilian government also offers special subsidies and low-interest credit support for companies and individuals purchasing small-scale farm machinery.

"Chinese agricultural machinery is in high demand in Brazil, with many local farmers now using tractors made in China," he said.

Agricultural authorities and universities from both countries have been introducing equipment and technology through programs such as the Science and Technology Backyards in Brasilia and Rio Grande do Norte, which were established last year.

Field investigations, machinery testing and maintenance, technology promotion and personnel training have taken place in both areas. The efforts are expected to result in a 40 percent increase in grain output among smallholder family farms.

"The China-Brazil STB program has brought compact, affordable machinery to Brazilian family farms, improving productivity, increasing income and — perhaps most importantly — renewing hope for rural commu-

"The China-Brazil STB program has brought compact, affordable machinery to Brazilian family farms, improving productivity, increasing income and ... renewing hope for rural communities."

Paulo Teixeira, Brazil's Minister of Agrarian Development and Family Farming

unities," Teixeira said.

Luiz Zarref, Latin America coordinator at the International Association for Popular Cooperation, said there is also a growing call for a greater variety of Chinese agricultural machinery in Brazil.

Currently, Brazil's family farmers need a wider and more flexible range of horsepower options, as they often require lower-powered equipment.

"Most Chinese machinery on the market ranges from 75 to 100 horsepower, while smaller models are better suited to smallholder operations," Zarref said.

Diversified equipment that supports the full farming cycle is in high demand, he added.

As digital transformation becomes increasingly critical for the next phase of agricultural development, officials said more cooperation will focus on promoting smart agriculture in Brazil.

"We look forward to strengthening the partnership to bring precision farming and smart tools to Brazilian fields," Zarref said.

The China-Brazil Joint Laboratory on Mechanization and Artificial Intelligence of Family Agriculture was built in November last year to provide an innovative platform for advancing family agriculture in Brazil. The lab aims to promote technology transfer, including intelligent agricultural machinery for small and medium-sized fruit and vegetable production.

"We've completed the first golden 50 years of Brazil-China cooperation, and we're entering the next phase — another golden 50 years," Teixeira said.

Universities lengthen, cut short duration of academic programs

Evolving labor market needs call for flexible formats in higher education

By ZOU SHUO
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China's higher education system is undergoing notable adjustments in the duration of academic programs, as universities strive to balance academic rigor with evolving labor market demands.

On the one hand, institutions such as Changchun University have extended programs such as English major and veterinary medicine to five years, citing the need for deeper interdisciplinary training and compliance with national education standards. On the other hand, universities including Tianjin University and Zhejiang University are shortening their architecture-related majors from five to four years, responding to a cooling real estate sector and students' increasing urgency to join the workforce.

These divergent moves reflect how universities are recalibrating academic timelines to align with shifting industry needs and educational goals. While extended programs aim to deepen specialization and improve research quality, short-

ened ones prioritize agility and quicker employment opportunities in a fast-changing economy.

According to the 2024 undergraduate program filing and approval results recently released by the Ministry of Education, Changchun University has extended its English major from four to five years. It is among roughly 40 universities that have lengthened the duration of seven undergraduate majors over the past five years, including English major and veterinary medicine, according to ShanghaiRanking Consultancy, which evaluates institutions based on academic and research performance metrics.

The rationale behind longer undergraduate programs is multifaceted. In interdisciplinary or composite majors such as Changchun University's English (English-Spanish) program, students must master two languages and their related cultural contexts, significantly expanding curriculum requirements.

Similarly, the extension of veterinary medicine programs to five years is aligned with national policy. Standards introduced by the Minis-

try of Education in 2018 mandated the longer duration due to the major's extensive demands — to graduate, students must have more than 200 credits and significant hands-on experience, including six weeks of clinical internship.

This "educational overtime" trend is also visible at the graduate level. Professional master's programs, traditionally completed in two years, are increasingly shifting to a three-year format. Guangxi Normal University and Inner Mongolia Normal University, for example, will begin offering three-year professional master's programs in 2025.

Doctoral programs are lengthening as well. The Shanghai University of Sport and Wuhan University have extended some of their doctoral programs from three to four years, citing increased academic rigor and the complexity of research requirements.

High deferral rates further support longer graduate program durations. In 2021, 49.4 percent of doctoral students in China delayed graduation, often to improve the quality of their research, according to ShanghaiRanking Consultancy.

A 2023 study by Peking University found that more than 40 percent of deferred doctoral theses outperformed those submitted on time.

Among top-tier universities, "high-quality deferrals" were twice as common as in ordinary institutions.

Meanwhile, the 2024 Ministry of Education filing and approval results also showed that 49 universities, including Tianjin University, Northeastern University and Zhejiang University, have shortened certain five-year undergraduate programs to four years.

These changes primarily affect architecture-related majors, including urban planning, landscape architecture and historic building conservation engineering. The move is seen as a response to weakening job prospects for architecture graduates amid a sluggish real estate sector.

Separately, Wang Shuguo, president of Fuyao University of Science and Technology in Fujian province, is advocating for an integrated "eight-year bachelor-master-doctorate" model aimed at helping students enter the workforce with a complete education earlier.

As more universities experiment with credit-based systems and flexible durations, experts suggest the future of higher education may resemble an "educational supermarket", offering diverse pathways to suit various talents and aspirations.

Health pavilions steal show at 27th high-tech expo

By GUO YANQI
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Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping the future of healthcare, as showcased at the just concluded 27th China Beijing International High-Tech Expo, where innovations ranging from surgical robots to AI-powered traditional Chinese medicine diagnostics drew widespread attention.

At the Longwood Valley MedTech booth, a robotic arm glided over a life-sized artificial leg, demonstrating a simulated knee surgery with surgical precision and drawing a steady crowd of onlookers.

According to the company, the AI-powered orthopedic system is the world's first to integrate 3D reconstruction, intelligent planning, precise execution and digital evaluation into a single workflow. It supports complex surgeries

involving the hip, knee and spine — traditionally areas associated with longer durations and higher risk.

"The robot is highly intelligent and effective," said a staff member at the booth, who declined to give his name. "It can reduce a complicated three-hour operation to just 30 minutes."

Zeng Huicai, another company representative, said multiple hospitals are preparing to adopt the robot. The system is already in clinical use at several top institutions.

While surgical robots continue to revolutionize the operating room, other exhibitors focused on how AI can enhance traditional Chinese medicine.

At the booth of Guanwei Intelligent Technology, visitors lined up to try a multi-modal health scanner powered by AI. The device greeted users with a soft voice and conduct-

ed a rapid health assessment based on the TCM principles of observation, listening, inquiry and touch.

Using facial imaging, pulse sensing and a handheld grip, the system assesses vital indicators in two to three minutes. Driven by a vertical-domain AI model, it produces a personalized report with lifestyle guidance on topics such as nutrition and exercise.

Other AI-driven diagnostic devices on display analyzed meridian activity and pulse rhythms, blending ancient Chinese practices with modern technology.

"These AI doctors are convenient for managing common conditions," said a visitor surnamed Zhang. "But for serious illness, I would still want to consult an experienced physician."

The healthcare section of the expo featured more than 160 companies, with a focus on life sciences and medical innovation, said An Yong-

jun, an official with the Beijing branch of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, the expo organizer.

Beyond healthcare, exhibits spanned a range of sectors, including cell and gene therapy, brain science, neuromorphic research, AI-based diagnostics, advanced medical equipment, public health services and innovations in modern agriculture and food technology.

"I'm quite interested in the device treating cancer with X-rays," said a male visitor from Scotland. "The technologies here are impressive, and there are good opportunities for international trade from China to the world."

These technologies are gaining traction in hospitals and research institutions across the country. The annual event was held from May 8 to May 11 at the China National Convention Center in Beijing.

Early peek



Journalists preview artifacts in the Yujiashan Archaeological Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Monday. Yujiashan, the first archaeological museum in the province, is scheduled to open to the public on Sunday. LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Experts blast US' unilateral deep-sea mining order

By LI SHANGYI
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A recent executive order signed by United States President Donald Trump to unilaterally authorize commercial deep-sea mining has raised concerns among experts, who warn that the move disregards the principle that the international seabed is the common heritage of humankind and could trigger destructive competition for marine resources.

On April 24, Trump signed an executive order aimed at promoting the development of seabed mineral resources in international waters.

The order called for an expedited process to review and issue licenses for seabed mineral exploration and commercial recovery in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The order emphasized that vast offshore seabed areas contain critical minerals and energy resources vital to strengthening the US economy and reducing dependence on foreign suppliers.

Polymetallic nodules, which are abundant on the ocean floor, contain critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and rare earth elements — key materials used in the production of batteries and electronic devices.

While countries are permitted to conduct exploration within their own exclusive economic zones, regulations for deep-sea mining in international waters have yet to be finalized by the International Seabed Authority, a United Nations body with 170 members.

The authority is working to develop a regulatory framework for deep-sea mining through multilateral negotiations.

On April 25, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said the area covered by the US executive order falls beyond national jurisdiction.

"No country should circumvent the ISA and international law and privately authorize any exploitation and exploration activities in the international seabed area at the expense of the common interests of the international community," Guo said.

It shows the US would push aside international law and international order in pursuit of its selfish interests," he said.

According to Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the international seabed and its resources are recognized as the common heritage of human-

kind. Activities in this area must serve the interests of all humanity and follow the principle of equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits.

On April 29, The Metals Company, a Canadian mining firm, announced that its US subsidiary, TMC USA, had submitted applications for exploration licenses and a commercial recovery permit in the high seas under the US Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act of 1980.

Ding Duo, director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said that because the US is not a party to the UN convention, its actions risk undermining the multilateral sys-

tem that treats the high seas as a common heritage of humankind.

Ding warned that the executive order's circumvention of international law could seriously impact the regulatory framework established by the ISA, including provisions on license issuance, benefit sharing and technology transfer.

"It might trigger vicious competition among countries and environmental degradation," he said.

"For many developing countries, especially those in the Global South, their shared interests in ocean resources will also be significantly affected," Ding added. "The principle that high seas resources belong to all of humanity is intended to ensure that developing countries benefit as well."

CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

Editor's note: The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.

Taiwan people trace family roots on mainland

Ancestral connections across Strait stretching back generations form unbreakable link

By ZHANG YI in Beijing and HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

With ancestral legacies spanning centuries, it's not uncommon for Taiwan people to embark on journeys to the Chinese mainland to seek out their roots.

One such traveler, Wang Tien-shan, a 43-year-old entrepreneur from Taipei, recalled his ancestral homage in Nan'an, Quanzhou, Fujian province, in October. Surrounded by kin in the ancestral temple, Wang, holding an incense stick, expressed his enduring desire to uncover his family history. "Kneeling before my ancestors' tablets, I felt a profound sense of homecoming, a reconnection to my origins evoking a profound sense of belonging and rootedness," he said.

For many individuals in Taiwan, spanning diverse backgrounds, professions and political affiliations, tracing their ancestry back to the mainland, particularly Fujian, is a prevalent theme. This practice reflects historical passages that have forged familial connections across the Taiwan Strait, binding the two sides through shared heritage.

About 80 percent of the Taiwan population can trace their ancestry back to Fujian, as throughout history, there have been numerous instances of large-scale population movements to Taiwan. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), administrative systems were established on the island, leading to a peak in travel and development between the island and the mainland.

Zhu Dingbo, the former deputy head of the China Museum for Fujian-Taiwan Kinship in Quanzhou, Fujian, said Fujian people, guided by clan ties, played pivotal roles in Taiwan's early development, establishing communities reminiscent of their Fujian origins.

Their nostalgic replication of village names and ancestral customs in Taiwan underscored this deep connection, with more than 400 pairs of villages sharing names across the Strait, and some 20,000 pairs of villages tracing lineages back to the same root on the mainland, he said.

These pioneers transplanted their traditions, erecting ancestral temples mirroring those in Fujian and meticulously documenting their lineage in family trees. Tombstones in Taiwan bear inscriptions of Fujian hometowns, affirming roots and preserving ancestral ties.

Today, in southern Fujian, people's family genealogies usually record their early ancestors engaging in trade, fishing and business activities after arriving in Taiwan, Zhu said. "All these traces serve as evidence of the interconnected bloodlines between both sides of the Strait," he said.

Reuniting families

For Wang from Taiwan, finding his mainland relatives was made possible with the help of traces left by his ancestors who moved to Taiwan over 200 years ago. Descended from Qing Dynasty merchants, his family's roots spanned from Fujian to Taiwan, trading camphor.

The family tomb in Taipei hints at their origins in Wurong, modern-day Nan'an, Quanzhou. Generations thrived in Taiwan before a branch returned to Fujian in the early 1900s, losing contact.

In 2010, Wang ventured to the mainland for work, founding a biotech startup in Wuhan, Hubei province, monitoring herbal medicine quality to improve its export.

"Good medicinal herbs lead to good medicine, so we must trace them back to the



LIANG LUWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Wang Tien-shan (front row fourth from right) from Taipei, Taiwan, shares a moment with his fellow Wang family clan members of Jinkeng area in Quanzhou, Fujian province, in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

source. Similarly, I also want to trace my own origins for a clear path forward," he said.

Despite his rich family history, Wang felt unsure of where to begin. In 2023, he expanded operations to Fujian due to the province's progressive policies on connecting traditional Chinese medicine standards across the Strait. This move reignited his quest.

Collaborating with the Wang family association in Quanzhou, he uncovered preserved genealogical records of mainland relatives, aligning perfectly with his Taiwan lineage. The mainland records detailed their ancestors' passage to Taiwan and that they were also seeking their Taiwan relatives.

Recalling the scene of his first meeting with relatives from the mainland, Wang said it took him some time to sort out the generational hierarchy as the mainland side had more generations. Therefore, facing someone over 30 years his senior, Wang said: "Brother, I'm back!"

Wang said the best inspiration from his family history is his ancestors' resilience and innovative spirit in developing Taiwan, and he now echoes this spirit, crossing the Strait from Taiwan to the mainland for personal growth.

Feeling a resonance with his ancestors, Wang said, "It's in my genes, pushing me to challenge myself and create a stronger me."

He is the first from his family in Taipei to venture to the mainland. Currently serving as the deputy head of the Taiwan-funded Enterprises Association in Wuhan, he said he intends to help young Taiwan people find opportunities on the mainland.

Strengthening bonds

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said, "Honoring one's ancestors and cherishing one's homeland are fine traditions of the Chinese nation."

When compatriots in Taiwan return to their ancestral hometowns, they are always warmly welcomed by their kin on the mainland, he said, welcoming more to go back to see the development of their homelands.

Former Democratic Progressive Party lawmaker Kuo Cheng-liang visited Fujian last year to honor his ancestors, and said that the bond of history, culture and bloodline was at its strongest.

Despite moving many netizens, Kuo's visit was met with a backlash from some within the DPP.

Chen said, "It is disgraceful and shameful to see some politicians in Taiwan making disparaging remarks out of separatism attempts and forgetting their own roots."

A recent change in wording on the website of the island government's "executive yuan" describing the island's population has stirred controversy, with critics accusing the administration of attempting to downplay the Han Chinese majority.

The website previously stated that "Han people account for 96.4 percent of the household-registered population in Taiwan". However, the latest version of the site now reads: "Currently, 2.6 percent of the household-registered population in Taiwan are ethnic minorities, 1.2 percent are newly arrived residents, and the remaining 96.2 percent are other population."

The revised phrasing, which omits any direct reference to "Han people" and labels the vast majority as "others", has triggered heated debate. Opposition Kuomintang lawmakers sharply criticized the change, accusing the DPP administration of engaging in "de-Sinicization" efforts.

Zhu, from the museum, is an expert in genealogical research who has helped over 300 individuals trace their ancestral roots on the mainland. He said that regardless of political backgrounds and party affiliations, people in Taiwan are very enthusiastic about connecting with their ancestral homes.

"In almost every family in Taiwan, their elders have mentioned that their ancestors had instructed them to return to the mainland to seek their roots and connect their family genealogy," Zhu said.

He suggested taking measures to guide and encourage grassroots clan organizations in mainland villages to assist Taiwan compatriots in returning to their ancestral roots and connecting with their heritage.

"Reunification would come very soon if everyone returned to their ancestral homelands to form a bond with relatives," he said. "There will never be warfare as we are all brothers and sisters, and descendants of the same bloodline."

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ZHANG YI

Ethnic composition of Taiwan society

Taiwan is a society of migrants who mostly came from the Chinese mainland over the past few centuries. Due to differences in ancestral origins and the timing of travel to the island, various ethnic groups have formed. Ethnic tensions — particularly those between people of different provincial origins — are intertwined with the conflict between reunification and "independence", becoming a key characteristic of Taiwan's social landscape.

As of 2023, Taiwan's total population stood at 23.42 million, mainly comprising four major ethnic groups: Minnan people, Hakka people, mainlanders and ethnic minorities.

The Minnan, Hakka and mainlanders are all primarily Han Chinese and together account for about 97.5 percent of the total population. The Minnan and Hakka mostly moved to Taiwan before 1945 and are collectively referred to as "native Taiwan people", or *benshengren*.

As of the end of 2021, Minnan people made up around 72 percent of the population, with ancestral roots primarily in Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in Fujian province. Hakka people accounted for about 12 percent, with ancestral origins in Longyan, Fujian and Meixian (now Meizhou), Guangdong province.

The "mainlanders" or *waishengren* refer to those who moved to Taiwan after 1945, particularly around 1949, along with the Kuomintang ruling group, as well as their descendants. They also comprise about 12 percent of the total population.

Taiwan authorities recognize 16 ethnic groups collectively referred to as "indigenous peoples", or *yuanzhu minzu*, accounting for 2.52 percent of the population.

In addition, by the end of 2023, there were 383,500 spouses from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, making up about 1.6 percent of the total population.

After Taiwan's retrocession in 1945, the island's economy was devastated due to the exploitation and suppression during Japan's wartime colonial rule. Skyrocketing prices and widespread poverty led to friction between native Taiwan people and the KMT authorities who arrived to take over governance.

On Feb 28, 1947, the government's crackdown on illegal cigarette sales triggered a large-scale uprising, which was violently suppressed by the military. This event sowed the seeds of the later "origin conflict" and became one of the catalysts for the emergence of "Taiwan independence" sentiments.

Following its 1949 retreat to Taiwan, the KMT rulers imposed martial law for 38 years under the pretex of "anti-communism" and "retaking the mainland", plunging society into an extended period of White Terror. This further deepened the divide between native Taiwan people and mainlanders.

After 1990, as Taiwan began its political transformation, separatist forces exploited the public's desire for democratization to promote "Taiwan independence". They used elections to stir up conflicts based on origin and ethnic identity. They linked "localism" with "patriotism" and painted "mainlanders" as "sellouts", promoting slogans like "Taiwan people elect Taiwan people" and advocating for the establishment of a "local administration".

As a result, the conflict between native Taiwan people and mainlanders became a prominent issue in Taiwan's political scene. To this day, while such tensions are not prominent in everyday life, they still exert significant influence in the political sphere.

Source: Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council

Coastal village embodies shared history

By HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou and ZHANG YI

In the coastal village of Gushi in Fujian province, a cluster of stone houses stands as a living monument to history. The village, in Lianjiang county, has been transformed into a leisure hub where young people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait gather — thanks to the efforts of Blues Chen, a 58-year-old artist from Taiwan.

Originally from Taipei, Chen is a director, singer and designer. In 2018, he ventured alone to the Chinese mainland, where he has since participated in rural revitalization projects across more than 10 villages in Fujian.

Gushi marks the third stop. Located just 9 kilometers from the Taiwan-administered island of Matsu, the village is the closest point on the mainland to the island. The sea route between the two takes about half an hour.

For Chen, the village carries personal significance. Thirty years ago, while living on Matsu, he often gazed across the Strait at

Gushi. "I never imagined that three decades later, I'd be standing in Gushi, looking back at Matsu," he said.

"Gushi exudes a historical charm reminiscent of fishing village culture in Matsu. The people are exceptionally friendly, making me feel right at home," he added.

Gushi is home to 90 stone houses similar to those in Matsu, enduring structures built to withstand wind and sand — a testament to the survival wisdom of the island's ancestors. Chen advocates for preserving and repurposing these century-old buildings, turning them into homestays and cultural retreats.

Officially opened to the public in January last year, the village has become a model for cross-Strait rural integration.

Inside the guesthouses, hemp ropes, fishing nets and vinyl records adorn the walls, reflecting a blend of island culture and artistic flair: Communal halls feature pianos and guitars, and shared kitchens are stocked with utensils, rice cookers and seasonings.

"Visitors can enjoy coffee, brew tea, unwind with a book, or purchase seafood from the port to cook their meals — slowing their pace in the village," Chen said.

He believes food and tea culture offer the best entry points for cross-Strait integration. His tea shop sells both mainland and Taiwan high-mountain teas. A nearby herb garden grows Taiwan lilies and other herbs used in local herbal teas, enhancing the rural landscape.

Taiwan specialties such as pineapple cakes, fruit juices and satay sauce are available in a 24-hour unmanned store. A small museum exhibits old letters, photos, audio-visual materials and other artifacts from cross-Strait exchanges. The village also hosts grassroots events for residents from both sides.

Chen said his dream is to build a utopia where young people from across the Strait can gather, exchange ideas and foster cultural and artistic collaboration.

Recently, he brought his mother — who



Blues Chen introduces Gushi village to visitors in Lianjiang, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

was born on the mainland and moved to Taiwan with her parents when she was 6 — to visit the mainland, hoping to comfort her nostalgia.

Fang Biling contributed to this story.

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CHINA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM



From left: A team of bird-watchers participating in the fourth Nanling Bird-watching Carnival walk on a road running through the Nanling National Nature Reserve during the event held from April 26 to 29. MA ZHIYU / FOR CHINA DAILY Two teams of the carnival's participants watch birds from a peak straddling Guangdong and Hunan provinces on April 28. ZHANG SIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Birders compete for views in reserves

Enthusiasts 'race' to survey species in protected areas in Guangdong, Hunan provinces

By CHEN LIANG
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It's truly hard to find anything in common between a 58-year-old retired businessman enjoying his retired life in Beijing, and a young college student studying biology at a university in Changsha, Hunan province.

However, they have teamed up twice already this year and competed together in a special kind of race — a bird race.

Bird races are events where participants "race" to identify bird species within and specific area and timeframe. The participant or team that identifies the most species is declared the winner.

Zhao Meisheng has been observing and photographing birds in his spare time for over two decades. However, it was only after his retirement a few years ago that he began to take this hobby more seriously.

"Previously, I focused mainly on bird photography, but now I dedicate more time to bird-watching," he said.

Zhao has started using a smartphone-based recording tool to document and manage his bird sightings. He actively participates in bird surveys as a volunteer and joins bird races held across the country.

During a bird race in March in Wuhai city, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Zhao found himself teamed up with two students from Central South University of Forestry and Technology, as they needed a driver for the competition. "The two students couldn't drive, and I am a pretty good driver," Zhao said.

His teammates were Huang Canxia and Zhou Jiayi, both senior students from the university in Changsha. Huang, who delved into bird-watching in 2023, quickly developed a deep fascination for the hobby. Having already taken part in a dozen bird races, she boasts a list of 652 wild bird species spotted in the country.

The trio's synergy in Wuhai was remarkable. Upon learning about a bird race organized by two nature reserves in Hunan and Guangdong provinces during the Wuhai race, they decided to apply as a team once more.

As a result, they became one of the 32 teams participating in the fourth Nanling Bird-watching Carnival. "I took part in the third Nanling bird race last year, which was exclusively hosted by the Nanling reserve in Guangdong," Huang said. "This year's event is much bigger."

Spanning two provinces

According to Liu Zhifa, deputy



Clockwise from left: A bird-watcher takes apart a mist net illegally set up in a field outside of the Nanling National Nature Reserve during the bird race. ZHAO JINFU / FOR CHINA DAILY An Oriental pratincole, photographed near the reserve, is proclaimed top bird of the race. PAN WEIYING / FOR CHINA DAILY A yellow-breasted bunting takes a break in a patch of farmland near the town of Mangshan in Hunan province on April 27. ZHAO MEISHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

head of the Guangdong Nanling National Nature Reserve's publicity and education department, the Nanling reserve borders the Mangshan National Nature Reserve in Hunan along the ridgeline of the Nanling Mountains, which straddle both provinces.

"We are on the southern slope and they are on the northern slope," Liu said. "We are protecting the same ecosystem. So a bird race held in both reserves will mean a more comprehensive bird survey for the area."

He traveled between the provinces four or five times to coordinate the event with his counterparts in the Mangshan reserve.

Finally, on the morning of April 26, the carnival kicked off in the Mangshan reserve in Yizhang county, Hunan. Besides the 96 contestants for the 84-hour bird race, bird experts invited by the organizing committee as judges of the race, rangers from both reserves and hundreds of local people attended the opening ceremony held in front of the Mangshan National Forest Park entrance.

Zou Bangxian, an official from the Forestry Administration of Guangdong Province, expressed his hopes for the event to serve as a catalyst for fostering greater collaboration between the provinces in areas such as ecological corridor development along the Nanling Mountains, coordinated species protection and shared natural education.

"By leveraging the ecological

advantages of the Nanling Mountains for high-quality development, we expect that the event can contribute the wisdom of Guangdong and Hunan to national ecological civilization construction ... and deepen ecological cooperation between the two provinces through concrete actions," he said.

The management bureaus of the two reserves signed a strategic cooperation framework agreement, outlining their commitment to comprehensive cooperation in resource management, scientific research and monitoring, public education, and outreach and community engagement.

"In the future, I think we will approach our conservation issues with a wider perspective," said Li Yonghui, Party secretary of the Mangshan reserve. "We will consider solutions that encompass the entire mountain range rather than focusing on individual reserves."

Sharing sightings

For the contestants, the event was a two-phase race. They spent two nights in the town of Mangshan, bird-watching along three suggested routes in and around the reserve. On April 27, the teams from Mangshan National Forest Park to the headquarters of the Nanling reserve in Ruyuan Yao autonomous county, Guangdong.

This journey took them through Nanling National Forest Park, the core area of the Nanling reserve. They spent three nights and two full



days exploring the reserve's five recommended routes. On April 26, Zhao, Huang and Zhou began their race at 6:30 am and returned around 7 in the evening.

The weather in the first two days was gloomy, with intermittent drizzle. Even when it wasn't raining, mists shrouded the peaks and valleys in Mangshan National Forest Park, making it truly challenging to search for birds in the dense forest.

"Birds are not active in bad weather," Zhao said. "Even though bird songs can be the only requirement for a decent record, you can harvest nothing when the birds stop singing."

On the first day of the race, the team recorded 50 bird species.

"It was a little less than we expected," Huang said.

Meanwhile, Le Weiqiang, a seasoned birder from Guangzhou, was invited to be one of the race's judges due to his extensive knowledge of the region's avian life.

Deciding to explore a section of farmland just outside Mangshan town, Le said: "It's right in the migration season. Bad weather might push some migratory birds to make a stopover in some less obvious places."

In a small rapeseed field, Le and Liu Zhifa spotted dozens of buntings — small seed-eating birds about the size of a sparrow.

"There are five species here, including a dozen yellow-breasted buntings, which are critically endangered according to the Inter-

national Union for Conservation of Nature," Le said.

Later, they shared these sightings with a few of the contestants.

"This patch of farmland can be quite productive during the migration season," Liu said. "We hope more teams visit the site as it might yield more records. After all, a bird race is more akin to a bird survey than a competition. True bird-watchers are always eager to share their discoveries."

The next morning, Zhao, Huang and Zhou visited the site. They successfully spotted the yellow-breasted buntings. Additionally, Huang and Zhou saw a golden-headed cisticola, a tiny songbird, though Zhao missed it.

"It's a lifer for me," Zhao said, referring to the bird-watching term for a first-time sighting. "It's normal to miss a lifer if you're not in the right place at the right moment."

Memories linger

All of the teams and the judges moved to Wuzhishan, a small community where the Nanling reserve headquarters is located, on the evening of April 27.

Over the next three days, the weather improved, remaining bright and sunny. "Since the Nanling National Forest Park has been closed to the public since 2018, the lack of human interference has made many wildlife species there bolder."

A family of three Cabot's tragopans, a pheasant under State first-class protection, frequented a site at

the park, giving all the teams opportunities to admire them.

"One of the tragopans moved quietly from a distance to just several meters away from where I stood, feeding on fallen wildflowers with ease," said Liao Chanyun, a member of a team from another national nature reserve in Guangdong.

"It was a truly unforgettable moment for me."

By the end of April 28, Zhao and his teammates recorded 126 species and the total number of bird species recorded by the 32 teams reached 300.

One team discovered mist nets illegally placed in a patch of farmland near the boundaries of the nature reserve, intended to trap migratory birds. They promptly reported their findings to Liu. The reserve mobilized a group of rangers to dismantle and remove the nets, ensuring the safety of migratory birds in the area.

The race concluded at 6 pm on April 29, with Zhao and his team achieving a count of 150 bird species. Following the event, all participating teams collectively logged 313 bird species into the event's smartphone-based record app.

The judging panel commenced a review process that evening. Each team was scrutinized as they presented evidence and detailed their sightings of certain "suspicious" species — birds uncommon to the region or specific habitats.

The exhaustive review continued until 2:30 am on April 30, resulting in the refinement of the species list from 313 to 242.

"Our primary goal was to provide comprehensive and accurate bird records for the two reserves," said Le regarding the judging process.

Despite the rigorous vetting, Liu noted a significant improvement from the previous year, with this year's record boasting 32 additional species.

An exceptional find near the Nanling reserve, the Oriental pratincole, observed by three teams, emerged as a novel record for the reserve and was crowned the top bird of the race. The victorious team clinched the title by documenting a remarkable total of 175 bird species.

Following the conclusion of the event, teams wasted no time in sharing their trip reports and experiences from the race across social media platforms.

"As part of our guidelines, each team is expected to post an article or a video narrative online," Liu said. "We hope the memories of the event can endure a little longer."

Zhao harvested two lifers during the carnival, celebrating the conclusion of the race by sharing some good oolong tea he brought with his teammates.

"I brought a bottle of liquor from my hometown for the celebration," Huang said. "We shared it with other bird-watchers during our dinner after the race. Anyway, a bird race is truly a gathering of birders."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

WORLD

Plans on for China-Brazil transport link

Project will create faster alternative to current shipping routes, reducing costs

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires, Argentina
For China Daily

Plans are once again moving forward to develop a major transport corridor that would allow goods to move between Brazil and China faster across the Pacific Ocean.

When completed, the project would create a faster alternative to current Atlantic shipping routes, greatly reducing transport times and costs for Brazil's agricultural exports such as soy, beef and grains.

While a plan to create a faster Pacific Ocean route for Brazil-China trade has been under consideration since 2014, it was originally intended to move via Chile. The development of the Chancay Port and other infrastructure in the past few years has opened the door to the new route via Peru.

This is one of multiple projects underway between Brazil and China as cooperation between the two countries deepens.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is on a five-day China visit that coincides with the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum in Beijing on Tuesday. The forum aims to foster cooperation between China and Latin America. It connects China with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, or CELAC.

Last month, a Chinese delegation that included officials and experts from the Ministry of Transport and China State Railway Group conducted a weeklong feasibility study to consider the potential of a corridor that would traverse four Brazilian states and connect Brazil to the Chancay Port via road, rail and waterways. Joao Villaverde, secretary for institutional coordination at Brazil's Ministry of Planning, announced the visit on social media in mid-April. "This is the beginning of a technical relationship for in-depth studies, particularly in railways, that revolve around these strategic pillars," Villaverde said.

The Brazil-Peru Bioceanic Corridor initiative would revive a plan first introduced in 2014 to link Brazil with port terminals along the Pacific Ocean. The idea regained momentum in November 2024.

"It will be something extraordinary, in the sense of economic development for the interior of Brazil, for the poorest regions," Minister of Planning Simone Tebet told the Brazilian outlet CartaCapital on Saturday.

Tebet, who is part of Lula's delegation this week, said she met with representatives of the China State Railway Group and found them to be "very interested" in helping Brazil expand its railway network across the country.

Comments from the Chinese Ministry of Transport and the China State Railway Group are not available.

The proposed new corridor, if built, would cut the distance goods have to travel from Brazil to China by as much as 10,000 kilometers by

making it possible for goods to travel directly across the Pacific Ocean instead of the more round-about route across the Atlantic and around the Cape of Good Hope in the southern tip of African continent or through the Panama Canal.

"Peru is Brazil's natural gateway to the Pacific, and there are two main routes," said Alejandro Indacochea, president of law firm Indacochea Asociados and founding professor at the Centrum Business School at Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

The first route uses an existing interoceanic highway that connects Brazil's key industrial zones to Peru's Madre de Dios region. From there, goods move to the Port of Matarani and then to the Chancay Port for direct shipping to Shanghai.

The second proposed route involves a railway link between Cruzeiro do Sul and Pucallpa, cities separated by 100 km of dense Amazon rainforest.

Key player

"This infrastructure strategy will cut logistics costs and freight transportation time, making Brazilian products more competitive in Asian markets," said Robson Cardoch Valdez, a professor of international relations at the Brazilian Institute of Education, Development and Research. "It also reinforces Brazil's role as a key player in Atlantic-Pacific trade connections."

"Peru and Brazil share a long border through the Amazon, with a unique tri-border region ... where Bolivia meets both countries. But the Amazon is still not fully integrated with the rest of Peru and Brazil," said Indacochea. "This new rail connection would provide direct access to the Chancay megaport for shipping goods to Asia."

The recently completed Chancay Port, built with \$3.5 billion from the Chinese State-owned group COSCO Shipping, reduces shipping time to China by up to 20 days while cutting logistics costs by at least 20 percent. The facility is projected to generate \$4.5 billion in annual revenue and create over 8,000 jobs in Peru.

Brazil has been China's largest trading partner for 14 years, becoming the first Latin American nation to surpass \$100 billion in annual bilateral trade.

According to Valdez, the Brazil-Peru Bioceanic Corridor project will boost northern and northeastern Brazil's economies through the East-West railway project and create spillover benefits from the enhanced role of Porto Sul in Bahia.

"Brazil can expect substantial returns from this investment, both directly and indirectly," said Valdez. "For example, we'll see faster access to Asian markets and increased flow of Brazilian agricultural and mineral exports, especially from the Central-West region that is rich in raw materials."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Homecoming hardships



A girl plays near a river in Sake, a small town in North Kivu Province, the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Sunday. Many residents of Sake were forced to flee due to attacks by the rebel group known as M23. Though life is gradually returning to normal as they return home, the residents face significant challenges such as damaged infrastructure and shortages of basic supplies. ZHENG YANGZI / XINHUA

Japan's PM ties auto tax to tariff talks

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
and HOU JUNJIE in Beijing

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Monday rejected the possibility of reaching a preliminary agreement with the Trump administration that would address tariff measures excluding automobiles.

"We cannot accept such a thing. Japan's policy is clear," Ishiba said in response to a question from Kensuke Onishi, a lawmaker from the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, during a session of the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives.

The United States has expressed reluctance to negotiate the additional 25 percent tariffs on imports of automobiles, steel and aluminum. Ryosei Akazawa, Japan's chief tariff negotiator, reiterated Tokyo's position, stating, "Our stance remains unchanged — we have conveyed that all sector-specific tariffs, including those on automobiles, as well as reciprocal tariffs, are regrettable, and we are requesting a review."

Speaking about the US tariff measures, Ishiba reiterated the view that Japan is facing a "national crisis", stressing that both the business community and the labor sector have voiced distinct concerns.

"We will take all possible measures in the negotiations while gathering various domestic opinions," he said, adding that the government will implement additional measures without hesitation, if necessary.

His remarks echoed comments made on Sunday during his appearance on a Fuji Television program, where he emphasized that Japan's call for the elimination of automobile tariffs remains unchanged. He also noted that Japan differs from the United Kingdom in terms of

trade and investment relationships with the US.

"The real focus of the current negotiations is how much investment and job creation can be brought to the United States. That is the core issue," Ishiba said. "Compared to Japan, the UK has neither invested as heavily in the US nor generated as many jobs. So just because the UK did something doesn't mean Japan will follow suit."

He also warned of the economic consequences of high US tariffs, stating, "If tariffs remain high, American cars will become more expensive. ... For the sake of the US economy as well, shouldn't those tariffs be lowered?"

Responding to US claims that Japan's automotive safety standards constitute a nontariff barrier, Ishiba defended Japan's regulatory framework. "Each country has its own road and traffic conditions, and prioritizing public safety is the same in both the US and Japan," he said. "We will not compromise the safety of the Japanese people simply to follow what the US says."

During his appearance on Fuji Television, Ishiba was asked whether Japan would consider extending the negotiation deadline, given the impending expiration of the US 90-day tariff suspension in July. He responded, "The arrival of a deadline does not mean we are bound to accept an unreasonable or disadvantageous compromise. We must persist in our efforts until we can clearly demonstrate that Japan's national interests are secured."

Separately, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan announced on Monday that Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the World Trade Organization, will make an official working visit to Japan from Monday to Wednesday.

The ministry said the visit is expected to further strengthen Japan's cooperation with the WTO toward maintaining and reinforcing the multilateral trading system, including advancing the WTO reform.

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New vehicles are parked at Daikoku Pier in Yokohama, Japan, on April 11. PHILIP FONG / AFP

Zelensky offers to meet Putin in Turkiye

KYIV — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was ready to meet Vladimir Putin in Turkiye on Thursday after US President Donald Trump told him publicly to immediately accept the Kremlin leader's proposal of direct talks.

Zelensky's suggestion of a meeting with Putin capped a dramatic 48 hours in which European leaders joined Zelensky in demanding a 30-day ceasefire from Monday, only for Putin to make a counterproposal to instead hold the first direct Ukraine-Russia talks since the early months of the 2022 conflict.

"I will be waiting for Putin in Turkiye on Thursday. Personally," Zelensky wrote on X.

The Kremlin said on Monday that it was focused on "serious" ways to achieve long-term peace with Ukraine, but did not comment on Zelensky's invitation for a personal meeting with Putin.

The Russian president, in a nighttime televised statement on Saturday that coincided with prime time in the US, proposed direct talks in Istanbul on Thursday.

Putin's suggestion came hours after major European powers demanded on Saturday in Kyiv that he agree

to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire or face "massive" new sanctions, a position that Trump's Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg endorsed.

Zelensky, too, had said Ukraine was ready for talks, if Moscow agreed to the 30-day ceasefire.

Yet, Trump, who has the power to continue or sever Washington's crucial supply of arms to Ukraine, took a different line.

"President Putin of Russia doesn't want to have a Cease Fire Agreement with Ukraine, but rather wants to meet on Thursday, in Turkiye, to negotiate a possible end to the bloodbath. Ukraine should agree to this, immediately," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Speaking in his nightly address, Zelensky said that Ukrainian forces would respond in kind if Russian troops did not observe a truce.

Germany's government said on Monday that European countries will start preparing new sanctions on Russia unless the Kremlin, by the end of Monday, starts abiding by a 30-day ceasefire.

"The language of ultimatums is unacceptable for Russia, it is not suitable. You can't use such language with Russia," Kremlin spokes-

man Dmitry Peskov said when asked about the German and other European warnings.

In response to the willingness shown lately by Russia and Ukraine for peace talks, the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday expressed the hope that the parties concerned will carry on dialogue and negotiations to reach a peace agreement.

"On the issue of the Ukraine crisis, China's position has been consistently clear, and we support all efforts dedicated to peace," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular news conference in Beijing.

Lin said Beijing has always believed that "dialogue and negotiation is the only viable way out of the Ukraine crisis."

"China is ready to act in accordance with the aspirations of the parties concerned, work together with the international community, and continue to play a constructive role for the final resolution of the crisis and the realization of a lasting peace."

Zhang Yunbi in Beijing contributed to this story.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Concerns expressed over UK-US trade deal

By EARLE GALE in London
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Politicians, bankers and experts have voiced concerns about the United Kingdom's new trade deal with the United States, noting most British products now face higher tariffs than they did a month ago, in spite of the agreement.

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey said the deal was a "good thing", but noted it will not fully mitigate tariffs unveiled by the United States.

"I have to say it's good news. In a world where it will leave the effective tariff rate higher than it was before all of this started, I do think we need to bear that in mind," Bailey said during a question-and-answer session at an economics conference in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Previously, the Bank of England, which is the UK's central bank, had warned that Trump's initial set of tariffs would shrink the UK economy by 0.3 percent over three years. Most of the damage would have come from a reduction in demand for UK products from US consumers, but around one-third was attributable to a slowing world economy damaged by tariffs imposed on other nations.

Bailey noted the UK economy will still slow down, regardless of the UK-US trade deal, because of the impact of tariffs on the global economy.

"The impact of all these developments on the trade front, on the UK outlook, is conditional, therefore, not only on the UK trade agreement but also what the rest of the world agrees (on) as well," Bailey said.

The trade deal, which calls for tariffs to be slashed on UK exports of cars, steel and aluminum from the previous 27.5 percent and 25 percent, means most UK exports will now be subject to Trump's baseline 10 percent tariff. That still means the UK is facing higher tariffs than was the case before Trump came to power.

Bailey urged the UK to ensure it exports as much as possible to the European Union, and he said nations should try to preserve global open-trading systems.

Tina McKenzie, policy chair at the UK's Federation of Small Businesses, told the Financial Times: "We welcome the fact that an initial US-UK economic agreement has been achieved, which is significant in and of itself."

"But with broad 10 percent tariffs likely remaining in place, we need to see what's in the plan to boost SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) trade — and that remains unclear."

'Worse position'

Kemi Badenoch, leader of the UK's opposition Conservative Party, told LBC radio that the deal leaves the UK in a "worse position" than it was in earlier this year.

"We shouldn't congratulate ourselves because things are slightly less painful than before," she said. "I don't have a problem with the prime minister trying to fix things. What I do have a problem with is him trying to pretend a little thing is a big historic deal."

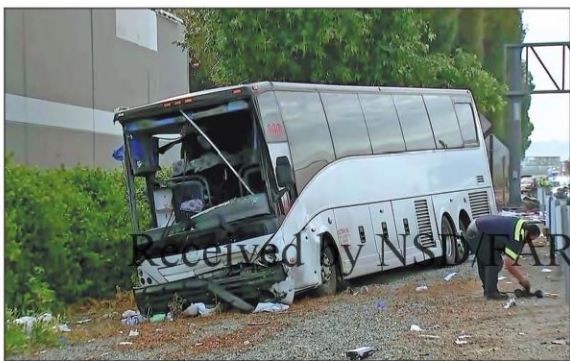
Badenoch said the "little tariff deal" goes some way toward fixing "what Donald Trump imposed on us last month."

"Two months ago, we had tariffs from the US that were about 2 to 3 percent. They are now 10 percent," she added.

Economist Joseph Stiglitz, a professor at Columbia University and recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, told Sky News he thought it was not a "great achievement".

"Any agreement with Trump isn't worth the paper it's written on," he said. "I would view it as playing into Trump's strategy. His strategy is divide and conquer, go after the weakest countries, and sort of put the stronger countries in the back."

Tragic trip



A tour bus crashes after colliding with a sport utility vehicle on a Los Angeles area freeway on Sunday. One person was killed and 32 people were injured, officials said. KABC-TV VIA AP

BUSINESS

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A villager sells blueberries via livestreaming in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. SI WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Livestreaming plays key role in growth

By FAN FEIFEI
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Livestreaming e-commerce, the practice of promoting products via live online broadcasts, has played a vital role in bolstering the growth of consumption and expanding employment, serving as an important force driving China's high-quality economic development, a new report said.

According to a report released by the research institute of the China International Electronic Commerce Center, a livestreaming room can generate more than 30 new occupations and create a large number of jobs in the upstream and downstream of industrial chains.

These new professions include livestreaming hosts, video analysts, video editors and cost assessors, while new jobs related to the operation of livestreaming rooms include the selection of products, video script planning, content production and data traffic allocation.

Based on the survey from short video platform Kuaishou, among the enterprises that have been continuously conducting livestreaming marketing, over 70 percent of new customers come from livestreaming e-commerce and the speed of product innovation after livestreaming sessions has doubled, the report noted.

This indicates that livestreaming e-commerce has become a significant driving force for enterprises to acquire new users and promote industrial innovation.

The report pointed out that by leveraging cutting-edge digital technol-

ogies such as artificial intelligence and big data, livestreaming has offered consumers an interactive, immersive and real-time shopping experience, and an increasing number of brands are starting their own livestreaming activities on platforms to forge a stronger emotional connection with shoppers.

"E-commerce via livestreaming has not only profoundly changed consumers' shopping habits, but also injected new impetus into the country's economic growth," said Zhai Weibin, deputy head of the China International Electronic Commerce Center.

The report highlighted the significant role of livestreaming e-commerce in contributing to regional economic growth, driving industrial transformation and upgrades, supporting rural vitalization and expanding sales channels for agricultural products.

Li Yongjian, a researcher at the National Academy of Economic Strategy under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said livestreaming e-commerce can help narrow the income gap between urban and rural residents, as research shows that if the gross merchandise value or GMV of fresh food increases by 1 percent during the livestreaming sessions, the per capita disposable income of rural residents will increase by 0.03 percent.

Data from market consultancy iResearch showed that the revenue of China's livestreaming e-commerce sector reached 5.8 trillion yuan (\$803.3 billion) last year, with the compound annual growth rate reaching 18 percent

between 2024 and 2026.

Experts said short-video platforms are doubling down on efforts to expand their presence in livestreamed shopping, with online traffic shifting from traditional e-commerce platforms to video-sharing apps.

Meanwhile, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence has become a new engine bolstering the high-quality development of the livestreaming e-commerce sector, and is reshaping the landscape of the industry given that the technology has significantly improved operational efficiency, reduced labor costs and lifted purchasing conversion rates, the report said.

The report stated that through data analysis and algorithm recommendations, AI can precisely match the goods or services that consumers are most interested in and predict their demand, providing data support for the design and production of new products.

Livestreaming featuring AI-powered virtual hosts has also emerged as a new trend. Global consultancy Forrester said more business-to-consumer brands are using virtual hosts to attract digital-savvy and novelty-seeking young consumers, as they cost less than human talent and reduce risks such as celebrity scandals.

"Livestreaming could allow hosts to interact with customers in real time and answer their queries immediately, which will greatly improve people's shopping experiences and lure more shoppers to purchase online," said Chen Tao, an analyst with internet consultancy Analysys in Beijing.

Briefly

Major HSR sees big progress

Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu High-speed Railway, a key part of China's fast-expanding HSR network, sees major progress as a participating State builder reports vital momentum. China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau said it had recently

installed the first T-shaped beam for its undertaking Bid 3 of the Nanjing North Railway Station renovation project. The renovation will enhance the railway station's role in the Yangtze River Delta region, cutting travel duration among Shanghai, Nanjing, Jiangsu province and Hefei, Anhui province, to less than 90 minutes.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 29 pips to 7.2066 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Mutual benefit, respect should guide trade talks

Expert: Chinese, US economies highly integrated with each other

By ZHU WENQIAN
and LIU ZHIHUA

Fair and equality-based negotiations for mutual benefit and with mutual respect should be the basis for solving trade disputes between China and the United States, said a senior expert.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Zhu Guangyao, former vice-minister of finance, said Sino-US economic and trade relations not only matter for the two nations themselves, but also for the rest of the world. A trade war between them is undesirable for all.



The two countries announced a series of tariff adjustment measures aimed at easing trade tensions on Monday, after a two-day high-level meeting on economic and trade affairs in Switzerland, according to a joint statement issued by both governments in Geneva.

The meeting was held between Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng and US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent.

The US economy and the Chinese economy are highly integrated with each other, but high tariffs have made trade between the two countries reach a very difficult situation, which is bad for everyone, Zhu said.

Zhu said the US wants to use tariffs to reshore manufacturing, as it

believes manufacturing outflow is bad. Yet, that is just a "one-sided assessment", and the US actually benefits a lot from globalization.

He agreed that the US trade deficit is in nature associated with the dollar's strong position in the international trade and financial systems. It is impossible for the US to seek a trade balance while trying to maintain a strong position of the US dollar.

"We should see a comprehensive analysis of the balance of payments, not only trade flows, but also financial flows," he said, adding that the US greatly benefits from capital flows into the country, and that has allowed the US to take advantage of globalization for many years.

Returning to talks is important for China, for the US, and for global peace and development, Zhu said.

Since the US announced its so-called "reciprocal tariffs" on China and many other countries in April, China has taken firm countermeasures to protect its legitimate rights and firmly opposes the US abuse of tariffs.

Zhu said the moves protect China's own interests, and more importantly, the rule-based global trade system with the WTO at the center.

He added that China's development in high-tech industries, including artificial intelligence, tells the world how hard Chinese people work and the positive results China has achieved.

"Domestically, we must have this strong economic stimulus program

and maintain the sustainable development of the Chinese economy, and not be affected by big external uncertainties. China is capable of enhancing research and development and realizing self-reliance," Zhu said.

"Some US companies have already recognized this trend. The only right way for (the US) is back to real communication-based mutual respect and win-win cooperation (with China)."

China's decision to engage in talks with the US reflects China's profound sense of responsibility, and demonstrates its strategic determination to not compromise on principle issues, said Ying Pinguang, professor at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics.

Meanwhile, a forecast by S&P Global said tariff-induced price shocks would raise US core consumer prices to 4 percent by the end of this year.

The International Monetary Fund, in its latest "World Economic Outlook" report released last month, cut its 2025 projections for the global and US economies by 0.5 percentage point and 0.9 percentage point, respectively, from its January forecasts.

The IMF said in the report that "the swift escalation of trade tensions and extremely high levels of policy uncertainty are expected to have a significant impact on global economic activity".

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RRR cut to spur further monetary easing

By ZHOU LANXU
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China's upcoming reduction in the reserve requirement ratio to zero for certain financial institutions has potentially unlocked substantial scope for further monetary easing, with another cut to the RRR likely in the second half of the year, analysts said.

Effective on Thursday, the RRR — which determines the proportion of deposits financial institutions must hold as reserves — for auto financing and financial leasing companies will be cut to zero from 5 percent.

The unexpected cut, analysts said, may have sent a significant signal that the so-called 5 percent lower threshold for China's RRR — as previously perceived by the market — does not actually exist, releasing up to 6 percentage points of potential easing space.

Zhang Jun, chief economist at China Galaxy Securities, said that with the RRR of some financial institutions set to be slashed to zero, the previously assumed implicit floor of 5 percent will be pierced.

There is, therefore, greater room for

reducing the RRR of commercial banks, with a 50-basis-point cut likely in the third quarter to coordinate with incremental fiscal stimulus and support the economy, Zhang said.

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said on Wednesday that it will reduce the RRR for financial institutions by 0.5 percentage point, bringing the average RRR of financial institutions to a level slightly above 6 percent.

Like previous cuts in recent years, the reduction will not apply to institutions that have implemented a 5 percent RRR, such as small-sized banks and rural financial institutions.

The PBOC, in a rare move, however, announced at the same time an RRR cut to auto financing and financial leasing companies, reducing it to zero from 5 percent temporarily to boost their credit supply capacity for automobile consumption and equipment renewal investment.

International experience suggests that a lower RRR calls for more sophisticated open market operations by a central bank. Currently, China's monetary policy toolkit has been expanded, enhancing the pre-

cision of liquidity management and creating room for further RRR reductions, according to a report by CIB research, an institute supported by Industrial Bank Co Ltd.

While China and the United States agreed to slash tariffs after trade talks over the weekend, analysts said there remains the need for further monetary and fiscal easing measures in China as the talks may still undergo twists and turns.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said the PBOC is likely to continue with interest rate cuts and RRR reductions in the second half, as China-US economic and trade negotiations may go through a "complex and winding process" while inflation remains low at home.

In a monetary policy report released in February, the PBOC pledged to continue improving the deposit reserve system and to fully leverage it as a policy adjustment tool, in line with evolving economic and financial conditions.

Ouyang Shijia contributed to this story.

Services consumption to underpin economic growth

By WANG KEJU
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As external uncertainties continue to escalate, consumption, particularly in the services sector, is poised to assume an increasingly important role in underpinning the Chinese economy this year, analysts said.

A high-level meeting convened by China's top leadership in late April placed high premiums on efforts to boost services consumption and strengthen the role of consumption in driving economic growth.

The meeting held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee also called for a swift removal of restrictive measures in the consumption sector.

Before the tone-setting meeting, Commerce Minister Yang Wenzhi said in mid-April that "expanding services consumption will be instrumental in further tapping into untapped consumption potential and in creating a crucial engine to drive consumption growth, both in the near term and the longer run."

International evidence suggests

that when a country's per capita GDP reaches around \$15,000, its consumption structure transitions from being goods-dominant to being services-driven. Given that China's per capita GDP has already surpassed \$13,000, the country's services consumption is now in a rapid growth stage, Wang said in a published article in Qiushi Journal, the flagship magazine of the CPC Central Committee.

In the first quarter of this year, retail sales of services grew by 5 percent year-on-year, outpacing the growth rate of goods retail by 0.4 percentage point, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

Analysts believe that services consumption will be a primary area of focus in the government's forthcoming policy initiatives.

"The country's trade-in policies have predominantly targeted the consumption of durable goods, which might front-load future demand," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Services consumption not only has a higher frequency of usage, but also presents substantial untapped poten-

tial that can be cultivated through focused policy initiatives, Xu said, adding that trade-ins could be extended to cover the service sector.

In mid-April, the Ministry of Commerce, along with eight other government departments, jointly issued an action plan for improving services consumption this year, covering established areas like catering, accommodation, healthcare and tourism, as well as new consumption formats such as sightseeing trains, skydiving and micro-dramas.

According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the five-day May Day holiday period saw 314 million domestic tourist trips across China, an increase of 6.4 percent compared to the same period last year. Domestic tourists also spent a total of 199.29 billion yuan (\$25 billion) during the holiday, up 8 percent year-on-year.

Compared to the relatively mature goods consumption market, China's services consumption market still has some key areas that need to be strengthened, said Lian Ping, head of the Guangkai Chief

Industry Research Institute.

"On the demand side, it will be important to take multiple measures to increase residents' disposable incomes, improve the social protection system and enhance consumers' services consumption abilities," Lian said.

Finance Minister Lan Fǎn said in a published article in Qiushi Journal on May 1 that China is emphasizing the integration of improving people's livelihoods and promoting consumption.

Key measures include appropriately increasing pension levels, raising the standards of basic medical insurance for rural and urban nonworking residents, issuing child care subsidies, and expanding the scale of student financial aid, all aimed at strengthening consumers' spending power and willingness to consume, Lian added.

Meanwhile, Lian from the Guangkai Chief Industry Research Institute noted that expediting the urbanization process and boosting the consumption capabilities of migrant populations will be crucial in unleashing the potential of services consumption.

Safety awareness



Employees from Datong West Power Supply Division of China Railway Taiyuan Bureau Group Co Ltd visit pupils at a primary school to distribute informational pamphlets and teach them about the importance of railway safety. By raising safety awareness, the children have a better understanding of how railways operate and their associated safety risks. LI TENG'YA / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Kaspersky on secure footing in China biz

Russian cybersecurity giant seeks to expand with stronger local ties

By LIU YUKUN
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Russian cybersecurity giant Kaspersky has defied broader industry challenges to post robust growth in China, citing a 20-30 percent annual revenue surge over the past five years and touting its potential in the world's second-largest economy as global cyberthreats escalate.

Alvin Cheng, general manager for China unit at Kaspersky, told China Daily that the annual growth of 20-30 percent of Kaspersky's China business outperformed the nation's overall cybersecurity market growth of 9.2 percent projected by research firm IDC for 2023-28.

Cheng attributed the momentum to booming demand for cross-border threat intelligence solutions and localized adaptations, including compatibility with China's domestically developed operating systems, as well as the country's burgeoning digitalization process.

The Russian cybersecurity firm's performance stands out as the global economic downturn has impacted the cybersecurity sector, where companies now face intense price competition as clients slash spending while demanding stronger protection.

"Security budgets have become the first casualty in corporate cost-cutting as companies fight for survival in this economic climate," said Li Shaopeng, founder of Beijing-based Digital World Consulting, at a recent conference.

Although the industry is facing challenges worldwide, Kaspersky identified growth opportunities across multiple niche market segments in China.

"China remains a strategic growth market where we see demand evolving beyond traditional information technology and operational technology security tools," Cheng said. "Our threat intelligence services, which now account for 40 percent of our revenue in China, are becoming critical as enterprises navigate cross-border data compliance. We're deepening collaborations with Huawei Cloud and Alibaba Cloud to deliver real-time malware signature updates and threat monitoring for multinational operations."

The executive outlined plans to launch a managed detection and response service project in China in the latter half of this year, backed by an initial over \$1 million commitment. The three-year rollout targets \$3 million to \$5 million in investment scale, with funds channeled into infrastructure like cloud, computing power center and AI-powered analytics tools.

Chinese authorities have

ramped up cybersecurity governance in recent years, with a series of laws and regulations, as well as national standards being rolled out to enforce data privacy, cross-border cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection, addressing needs across sectors.

IDC has projected that investment in China's cybersecurity will hit \$18.8 billion by the end of 2025, expanding at a 17.9 percent annual rate from 2021.

"China's high-tech manufacturing and renewable energy sectors — particularly multinationals managing overseas assets — currently drive over half of our local client base," Cheng said, noting that small and medium-sized enterprises now account for 40-45 percent of revenue. "We leverage our global threat intelligence network spanning 200 countries to help businesses venturing abroad."

Cheng highlighted China's industrial internet security advancements, where Kaspersky's operational technology (OT) solutions already lead Asia-Pacific sales, mirroring Beijing's push to harden smart manufacturing and energy grids.

OT cybersecurity refers to safeguarding industrial systems — including machinery, programmable logic controllers and protocol-based communications — against technical flaws, cyber intrusions and data breaches that arise from network connectivity in operational technology environments.

"In the field of OT security, we are enhancing threat intelligence and gateway detection. Additionally, we are strengthening compatibility with emerging areas such as chips, smart manufacturing and new energy sources like photovoltaics, on top of our existing OT products and systems," Cheng said.

Yu Mengda, general manager of industrial cybersecurity at Supcon Technology Co Ltd, an intelligent manufacturing service provider in Zhejiang province, highlighted Chinese enterprises' growing proficiency in industrial internet security alongside cost-effective service models.

Meanwhile, international players such as Kaspersky differentiate themselves through cross-border threat intelligence networks, rich databases and experience.

"Ransomware infections in control software can encrypt data, obscuring real-time operational visibility and jeopardizing production continuity," Yu said. "This underscores the necessity of malware behavioral analysis and maintaining comprehensive threat signature databases for effective defense."

Hunnu Air to increase E195-E2 flights to Beijing

By ZHU WENQIAN
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Eyeing the rapidly growing aviation market in China to further drive its growth, Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer SA said that "in China, for China" stands as its guiding principle and a natural outcome of its 25-year sustained commitment to the Chinese market.

The company said that it has learned that the deeper it embeds itself "in" China, the more precisely it can deliver "for" China.

One of its customers, Mongolian carrier Hunnu Air plans to increase round-trip services using Embraer E195-E2 aircraft between Ulan Bator and Beijing Daxing International Airport to a daily flight from June 1.

The airline has operated the round-trip service using the E195-E2 since April 30, and currently

offers four return flights per week. The flight is being operated by the first of two new E195-E2 aircraft delivered to Hunnu Air in April, and also marked the first operation of an E195-E2 aircraft model on a scheduled route to and from the Chinese mainland.

Since late 2023, the airline has operated the route with Embraer E190-E1 aircraft, a smaller model. The upgrade to larger aircraft shows the strengthening of connectivity between the aviation hubs of Mongolia and China, and highlights the fact that the two countries aim to foster closer economic and cultural ties, said Hunnu Air.

The carrier said it also plans to use the E195-E2 aircraft to increase capacity to Chinese cities such as Haikou and Sanya in Hainan province, and expand services to countries like Japan, Vietnam, India and South Korea.



China's first commercially operated hydrogen-powered locomotive began trial runs on Saturday in Liupanshui, Guizhou province. HUANG SHUJIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guizhou pioneers hydrogen power for coal transport

By YANG JUN and LIU BOQIAN
in Guiyang

China's first commercially operated hydrogen-powered locomotive began trial runs on Saturday in Liupanshui, Guizhou province, marking a significant milestone in the city's long-term drive to modernize its coal industry.

The locomotive can be fully refueled in about 15 minutes, delivering up to 800 kilometers of range and hauling over 4,500 metric tons, which makes it ideal for short-haul coal transport, according to the project management team. All of its hydrogen is sourced on-site, extracted from coke-oven gas at the local plant at about one-third the cost of conventional water-electrolysis production.

"An important advantage of hydrogen engines is their lower infrastructure cost," said Yang Kai, deputy director of the Liuzhi special district's bureau of industry and information technology.

Yang said that, unlike electric

trains, hydrogen engines "do not need an extensive power grid or storage facilities — hydrogen tanks on the locomotive are enough. And compared with diesel engines, they are much cleaner", as their only emission is water vapor.

The power unit uses a hybrid fuel cell plus lithium battery powertrain. Hydrogen fuel cells convert the gas directly into electricity to drive the wheels, while lithium batteries capture excess energy and provide an extra boost under heavy loads.

Moreover, with an energy conversion efficiency of up to 80 percent — twice that of diesel engines — the system performs especially well at high altitudes, where thin air hinders combustion engines. "On the high plateau, oxygen is scarce and diesel efficiency drops, but fuel cells need much less oxygen, making them suitable for routes such as the Qinghai-Tibet Railway," said the project leader from Meijin Energy.

Liupanshui's hydrogen initiative

builds on its abundant coal and power resources. In 2022, the local government partnered with Meijin Energy to launch a "Coal-Coke-Hydrogen" demonstration project. On Saturday, the project held its second-phase furnace ignition ceremony.

Under this arrangement, coal delivered by rail will be coked on site, while by-product coke-oven gas is purified into high-purity hydrogen, and a local network of hydrogen-filling stations will then refuel locomotives and heavy trucks, creating a clean-energy supply chain.

Using automated, environmentally friendly processes, the plant will produce 3.8 million tons of metallurgical coke and 40 million standard cubic meters of high-purity hydrogen each year. Once fully operational, annual coal and coke freight volumes are expected to reach 7 million tons, with a dedicated rail line handling 4 million tons.

In addition, 100 heavy trucks and four 8.6-meter hydrogen fuel cell

buses have entered service. The buses will operate on short-distance urban routes, and Liuzhi special district has already planned three demonstration corridors for the heavy trucks. These 100 trucks alone are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 3,000 tons per year.

"Hydrogen can effectively supplement our energy mix," Yang said. "Liupanshui is a coal-and-power industrial city with about 27,500 heavy vehicles moving coal, coke and construction materials. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), coal production, which is to hit 100 million tons, will drive huge demand for heavy trucks. Coupled with the nation's dual-carbon strategy, hydrogen applications here have vast market potential."

Luo Siyang contributed to this story.

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Growing affinity for sports, the outdoors add luster to wool

By ZHENG XIN
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Wool products designed for sports and outdoor activities are poised for significant growth in the Chinese market, driven by increasing wool adoption among brands in these sectors, said Jeff Ma, executive vice-president of Woolmark Greater China.

Ma highlighted that the demand trend for wool products in China is becoming more diversified and high-end. As consumers embrace quality lifestyles and sustainable fashion, wool's natural, renewable and biodegradable characteristics are increasingly favored.

"With the rise of sports and outdoor lifestyles, wool products have become the ideal choice for sports enthusiasts and outdoor explorers due to their excellent breathability, warmth and comfort," Ma said.

He added that as "more brands are doing light outdoor, leisure

sports and sports fashion prefer to use wool, it is believed that sports and outdoor wool products have huge growth potential in the Chinese market."

Woolmark views China as a dynamic fashion region and a global center for wool research and development, having established several development and education centers across the country to support the industry and promote the use of high-quality Merino wool.

The organization has established several wool development and education centers across China with local partners and universities, including the first Wool Development Center in Shandong province's Yantai that was established in 2013 and a Wool Education Center at Donghua University in Shanghai in 2018, aiming to strengthen the wool supply chain in China and promote the use of high-quality Merino wool.

While the fast-changing market and consumer demand present challenges, Ma sees significant

opportunities in China's rapid development, consumers' pursuit of quality and the national push for a low-carbon lifestyle, all of which boost the potential for the wool market.

Meanwhile, Chinese wool processing companies are undergoing a transformation from traditional manufacturing to a technology-driven industry to enhance their international competitiveness.

Executives from companies like Zhejiang Xiniao Textiles Inc, a Chinese textile company based in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, Jiangsu province-based Tianyu Wool Industry, and Chinese fashion brand ICICLE, highlighted investments in green and sustainable processing technologies, such as chlorine-free treatments and carbon footprint management, as well as the development of functional wool yarns with properties like high elasticity, waterproofing and moisture-wicking.

Companies are also upgrading

equipment with intelligent and digital technologies, including AI algorithms to optimize production, according to Nora Gu, marketing manager at Xiniao.

Strategies to boost international competitiveness include global production layouts, obtaining international certifications, collaborating with high-end and outdoor brands and fostering industry-academia-research collaboration.

According to John Williams, Australian consul general to Shanghai, China is the biggest consumer of wool and a global leader in wool processing. The partnership with Australia, the world's largest wool producer and exporter, is one that continues to grow and will benefit both countries.

The more than 50 years of collaboration between Australia and China in wool has seen complementarity in bilateral trade that has made the broader Australia-China commercial relationship stronger, he said.



A Hunnu Air aircraft lands at Beijing Daxing International Airport on April 30. TAO RAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Transport Association recently released data for global passenger demand for air travel in March. Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers, was up 3.3 percent compared to March 2024. Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers, grew by 5.3 percent year-on-year.

"There remains a lot of speculation around the potential impact of tariffs and other economic headwinds on travel. While the small decline in demand in North America needs to be watched carefully, March numbers continued to show a global pattern of growth for air travel," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director general.

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BUSINESSFOCUS

China charging ahead in computing power

Nation's ambition to develop AI underpinned by aggressive investments in infrastructure

By MA SI

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At the 8th Digital China Summit held in Fuzhou, Fujian province, from April 29 to 30, the spotlight shone brightly on China's accelerating artificial intelligence revolution.

A robotic dog flawlessly performed backflips on stage, humanoid robots sang emotionally resonant tunes, and an array of AI-powered gadgets — smart toys, glasses, mice and autonomous driving systems — captivated audiences.

Beyond the spectacle, however, lies a profound transformation: AI is no longer confined to laboratories or urban hubs, but is rapidly permeating every corner of the Chinese society, from farmlands to cities.

Behind this AI-driven metamorphosis is an invisible yet indispensable force: computing power.

As the backbone of AI development, computing power has become the battleground for global technological supremacy, and China is charging ahead with unprecedented momentum.

Roughly defined as the ability to process data, computing power includes information infrastructure and technologies to support information computing power, data storage and network capacity in the digital economy era.

China's ambition to develop AI is underpinned by aggressive investments in computing infrastructure.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China's total computing power reached 280 EFLOPS by the end of 2024, with intelligent computing power accounting for 90 EFLOPS, or over 30 percent of the total.

EFLOPS measure the speed of computer systems. It equals 1 quintillion floating-point operations per second.

By 2025, the country aims to boost its aggregate computing capacity to 300 EFLOPS, with AI computing power projected to rise to 35 percent of the total.

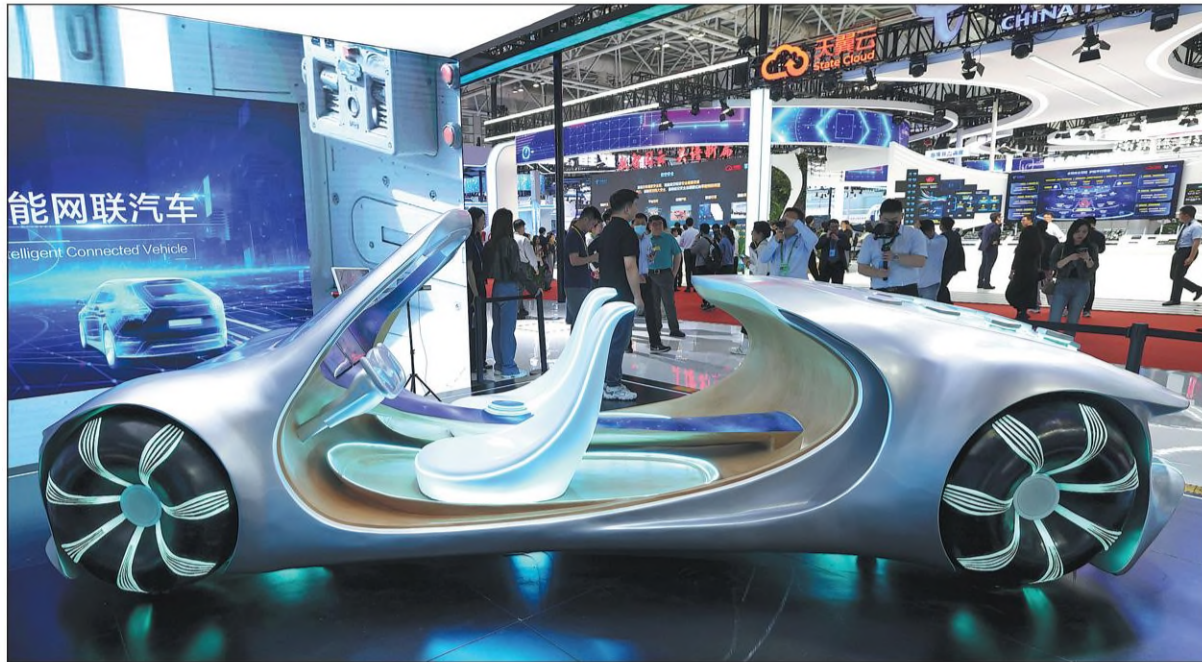
This push aligns with a national strategy to position computing power as the "new engine" of the digital economy.

Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasized that every yuan (\$0.139) invested in computing power drives 3 to 4 yuan in GDP growth. "In the global race for AI leadership, expanding computing power supply is critical," he noted.

Wu also emphasized the pivotal role of cutting-edge digital tools in boosting corporate productivity and reducing operational expenditures.

He projected robust growth for AI-driven software and services in the coming years, forecasting their emergence as a major catalyst for national economic expansion.

At the summit, State-owned telecom carrier China Telecom unveiled its upgraded intelligent cloud eco-



system, cementing its role as a linchpin in China's AI infrastructure.

With its Tianyi Cloud, or China Telecom Cloud, now ranking as the nation's largest cloud service provider by revenue — 113.9 billion yuan in 2024, surpassing Alibaba Cloud — the company is positioning itself as the "National Cloud" to spearhead China's transition from digitization to intelligent transformation.

"Cloud is the cornerstone of AI development," said Ke Ruiwen, chairman of China Telecom, during his keynote speech. "The company is committed to building Tianyi Cloud into a world-class intelligent cloud platform that integrates computing power, data, models and applications."

China Telecom's strategy hinges on two pillars, namely core technology innovation and scale. The company has established mega computing clusters in Shanghai and Beijing, and developed a fully self-reliant cloud stack, including the distributed cloud operating system CTyunOS — certified for national security reliability.

Notably, its "Xingchen" (Star-Ocean) large language model — boasting trillions of parameters — has been open-sourced, a rarity among State-owned enterprises.

Paired with the "StarSea" data intelligence platform, which aggregates over 10 trillion tokens of high-quality datasets, China Telecom has deployed more than 50 industry-specific AI applications in sectors like government, manufacturing and education.

China Telecom is aggressively commercializing AI, with smart terminals such as AI phones, cloud computers, and cameras already reaching 87 million users.

to exceed 1 trillion yuan (\$138.6 billion) in 2026, up from 505.95 billion yuan in 2023, according to a report by market research firm CCID Consulting.

At the summit, China Unicom showcased its 5G-A integrated sensing and communication technology, a game-changer enabling real-time coordination between drones, ground systems, and air traffic control. Its crown jewel, an urban drone blood delivery network, spans 1,200 square kilometers.

By leveraging 5G-A's ultra-reliable low latency and centimeter-level positioning, the system slashes delivery times by 60 percent, bypassing traffic gridlock to ensure lifesaving efficiency. "This isn't just about speed — it's about rewriting the rules of urban resilience," said an engineer of China Unicom at the demo.

China Unicom has so far deployed over 200 such benchmark projects nationwide for low-altitude economy in areas including disaster response, industrial inspections, tourism, public safety and logistics.

Luo Jun, director-general of the China Low-Altitude Economy Alliance, said the potential for the low-



Its "five-in-one" intelligent cloud ecosystem — spanning computing power, platforms, data, models and applications — aims to popularize AI access. The newly launched Triless computing architecture, for instance, simplifies cross-domain, heterogeneous computing resource scheduling and AI development, significantly lowering barriers for enterprises, China Telecom said.

The summit also highlighted innovative applications of AI large language models across diverse sectors, showcasing China's push to transform traditional industries through intelligent upgrades.

Top: A futuristic model of an intelligent connected vehicle is on display at the 8th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on April 28. WANG WANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above: A visitor experiences the functions of a humanoid robot at the booth of China Telecom during the 8th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou on April 29.

LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

In Hubei province's Lichuan, a pioneering county-level AI ecosystem is redefining tourism.

Leveraging Huawei's Ascend computing infrastructure and iFlytek's Spark large language model, the Lichuan Intelligent Computing Center has launched the nation's first county-level tourism-focused AI model.

The "AI Travel Lichuan" mini-program offers personalized itinerary planning, such as recommending family-friendly routes, accommodation, and transportation options for visits to local attractions. For merchants, the model generates targeted market-

ing content and optimizes order management.

AI's industrial footprint is also expanding rapidly.

Over 30,000 basic-level smart factories, 1,200 advanced facilities and 230 "exemplary" intelligent factories now operate across China, covering 80 percent of manufacturing sectors, driving efficiency and innovation, according to data from MIIT.

At the summit, Chinese automaker FAW Group unveiled OpenMind, an enterprise AI agent built on Alibaba's Qwen large language model. Capable of multi-turn dialogue, OpenMind streamlines business processes, policy consultations, and decision-making support, marking a leap in industrial automation.

Meanwhile, Inspur Yunzhou, an industrial internet leader in China, demonstrated how its Zhiye large model empowers sector-specific solutions.

Qi Guangpeng, chairman of Inspur Yunzhou, said the company collaborated with a cable manufacturer to train a specialized model using industry data to optimize processes like optical fiber sintering and equipment maintenance, boosting productivity by 20 percent and maintenance efficiency by 30 percent.

Despite its momentum, China faces hurdles in sustaining AI leadership.

Ke from China Telecom highlighted risks such as data bias, sensitive information leaks and AI-generated disinformation. To address these, China Telecom is building a "dynamic security shield" for AI systems, integrating safeguards across infrastructure, algorithms and content.

China's digital transformation has made great strides in recent years, with the Digital China Development Index climbing to 150.51 in 2024, up 10.65 percent from the previous year, said the National Data Administration.

The index is a benchmark for the assessment of China's digital progress. In 2024, indicators such as digital infrastructure and digital technology rose by 17.55 percent and 13.56 percent, respectively.

Jiang Xiaojuan, a professor at the University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, noted that emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics and internet-based systems have revolutionized the capacity to generate, process and distribute data on an unprecedented scale.

Highlighting China's position as the global leader in data production, Jiang stressed the nation's strategic edge in advancing its digital economy.

She called for intensified efforts to streamline public data sharing mechanisms, foster collaborative data utilization and strengthen governance frameworks to fully harness the transformative potential of data resources.

SOE forming vanguard of nascent low-altitude economy

By MA SI

Imagine piloting a drone through mist-clad mountain valleys, skyscrapers and bustling urban corridors at breathtaking speeds, all from a control station.

Now envision that same drone transforming into an airborne lifesaver, delivering critical blood supplies across a metropolis in 15 minutes.

These are not scenes from a sci-fi film, but real-world demonstrations at China Unicom's "Smart Skies, Connected Future" exhibition zone during the 8th Digital China Summit held in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in late April.

The State-owned telecom company is positioning itself at the vanguard of China's burgeoning low-altitude economy, a sector designated as a strategic emerging industry to drive high-quality development.

China's low-altitude economy is rapidly evolving from conceptual buzzword to operational backbone.

Backed by national policies and breakthroughs in 5G-Advanced networks, a critical evolution of 5G technology, this sector is projected



The booth of China Unicom shows innovative achievements of Internet 2030 in Beijing in September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

sector is set to become a cornerstone of China's economic landscape, fostering new quality productive forces and serving as a new growth engine.

China Unicom's emphasis on low-altitude economy is part of the company's broader push to deepen digital-intelligence integration and innovation to empower the construction of a Digital China.

Chen Zhongyue, chairman of China Unicom, said the company is a key contributor to the nation's digital transformation, outlining the company's three-pronged strategy to advance intelligent digital infrastructure, cutting-edge technologies and innovative applications.

The senior executive highlighted efforts to strengthen foundational networks, including scaling 5G-Advanced commercialization across over 300 cities and piloting 10-gigabit optical networks to support ultra-high-speed communities, industrial parks and factories. The company is also exploring integrated low-altitude intelligent networks for airspace coverage.

In parallel, China Unicom is accelerating the upgrade of internet data

centers to AI-driven data centers and shifting from general computing to intelligent computing. Initiatives include establishing 10 hub-based intelligent computing centers and deploying over 300 edge computing nodes.

Chen also showcased the company's AI innovations, including the Yuanjing AI large language model and over 40 industry-specific models widely recognized for enhancing economic operations, urban governance and industrial manufacturing.

Leveraging its expertise, China Unicom has formed specialized service teams to support digital economy, e-government, cultural digitization, smart societies and ecological sustainability.

Notably, its GeWu industrial internet platform, integrated with the Yuanjing industrial AI model, has optimized scenarios like simulation design, predictive maintenance and process control. To date, the company has implemented 7,500 5G-enabled factories and 30,000 industrial internet projects.

Looking ahead, Chen reaffirmed China Unicom's commitment to collaborating with partners across sectors to drive Digital China's development through intelligent infrastructure, technological innovation and transformative applications.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

Rationality, objectivity and pragmatism win the day in Geneva to benefit of all

The positive responses from around the world to the "substantial" progress China and the United States have made in easing their strained economic relations speak volumes of the profound global significance of the healthy development of relations between the world's two largest economies.

According to the joint statement released by the two sides on Monday, after the meeting between their respective trade delegations in Geneva over the weekend, the two countries recognize the importance of a sustainable, long-term, and mutually beneficial economic and trade relationship, and share the belief that continued discussions have the potential to address the economic and trade concerns of each other.

As long as they can implement their agreement to continue to advance related work with the spirit of mutual openness, continuous communication, cooperation and mutual respect, there is no reason why they cannot effectively put their economic and trade relations back on the right track, and in doing so set a good example for the world of how to resolve trade disputes and differences through dialogue and negotiation in good faith.

The lead of the Chinese delegation, Vice-Premier He Lifeng, said that the talks in Geneva were "candid, in-depth and constructive". His US counterpart, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, described them as "productive and constructive". That indicates that not only were the two sides on the same page after their discussions but there is a foundation and positive momentum for the further engagement they have agreed to, with the two sides due to establish an economic and trade consultation mechanism to continue their discussions.

As the joint statement shows, the meeting, which achieved substantial progress in significantly reducing tariff levels in the trade between the two countries, has proved to be more fruitful and promising than initially anticipated.

It is important now for the two sides to seize

the opportunity of the important consensus reached and the new mechanism for economic and trade consultations to further bridge their differences.

As the Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a statement, the moves related to the joint statement are in line with the expectations of producers and consumers on both sides, and in the interests of both countries and the common interests of the world.

The economic and trade teams of both sides still have a lot of work to do in the future. They need to restore bilateral trade first and then move on to broader issues. But China hopes that the US will build on what has been achieved at the Geneva meeting and continue to work with it to strengthen their mutually beneficial cooperation, maintain the healthy, stable and sustainable development of China-US economic and trade relations, and jointly inject more certainty and stability into the world economy.

Both sides should work to expand the pie of cooperation, and promote new development opportunities for Sino-US economic and trade relations. China and the US have great room for cooperation in manufacturing, emerging technologies and other fields. But whether the potential of Sino-US cooperation in these sectors can be unleashed depends on how the US views the cooperation, China's development, and the nature of bilateral collaboration.

China's resolute stance since the US launched a tariff war against it in 2018 should leave the US administration in no doubt that the country will not sacrifice its principled position or international fairness and justice to seek an agreement.

The results of the Geneva meeting were hard-won and are beneficial to both China and the US as well as the global economy. Its outcomes show that both sides now better understand each other's concerns. So they should cherish the progress that has been made so far and enrich their future talks by continuing to conduct them on an equal footing and with mutual respect.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Forum proof Global South is active architect of a fair multipolar world

The fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum opens in Beijing on Tuesday, marking a pivotal moment in the deepening partnership between the two regions which has withstood the test of international turbulence.

The high-level gathering is expected to adopt two landmark documents — a declaration, reaffirming the mutual commitments to peace, development, and equitable cooperation, and a joint action plan outlining concrete measures to enhance collaboration in technology, trade, infrastructure and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Launched 10 years ago, the China-CELAC Forum has emerged as a groundbreaking platform uniting China and all 33 independent nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Transcending geopolitical and geographical divides, the forum has demonstrated that unity, not hegemony, drives meaningful progress. Unlike traditional North-South aid models, China-CELAC cooperation is built on mutual respect, equality and shared prosperity. Since its inception, the forum has served as the cornerstone of China-LAC relations. Today, it stands as a flagship of South-South collaboration, aligning development strategies for the fostering of a community with a shared future.

The economic complementarity between China and the LAC has yielded remarkable results. Cooperation in critical minerals, infrastructure, renewable energy and high-tech industries has flourished, with

over 20 LAC nations joining China's Belt and Road Initiative. Under the framework of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, more than 200 infrastructure projects have been implemented, generating over 1 million jobs and accelerating regional connectivity.

China has solidified its position as the LAC's second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade surpassing \$500 billion in 2024. To further strengthen ties, China has signed mutual visa exemption agreements with seven LAC countries, while travelers from Brazil, Argentina and Chile benefit from China's 240-hour visa-free transit policy.

With the LAC prioritizing environmental sustainability and China leading in green technologies, particularly in electric vehicles and lithium battery production, the two sides are forging a powerful alliance advancing the global green transition.

Over the past decade, under the framework of the China-CELAC Forum, China and Latin America have established a comprehensive, multilevel and wide-ranging network for dialogue and cooperation. People-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two sides have flourished. The "Chinese language fever" continues to rise across Latin America, where 57 Confucius Institutes or Confucius Classrooms have been established in 26 countries.

Together, China and the LAC represent 20 percent of the world's landmass, 25 percent of the global population, and 25 percent of global

GDP, forming one of the most dynamic and promising economic blocs worldwide.

The participants in this year's forum will discuss future development cooperation and contribute their wisdom and strength to addressing global challenges, driving reform in global governance, and safeguarding world peace and stability. The meeting underscores the two sides' unified vision for sustainable development and multilateralism, reinforcing the region's role in shaping a more equitable global order. The collective influence of Global South nations has grown exponentially in recent years, with the LAC playing an increasingly strategic role in international affairs.

The China-CELAC Forum has continuously enriched and expanded its mechanisms for cultural and people-to-people exchanges. These efforts further amplify the voice of Global South countries on the world stage.

But the forum is more than a diplomatic platform, it is a testament to what the Global South can achieve through solidarity. In an era of fragmentation, it offers a model of inclusive, demand-driven partnership. As both sides embark on the next decade of collaboration, their alliance will not only benefit 2 billion people but also redefine the principles of international cooperation and reshape global governance, proving that the Global South is no longer a passive participant but an active architect of a multipolar world.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Holistic approach to enhance global security

The country's top authorities know well that the security environment has changed and that national security is no longer a narrow focus on military defense against external threats.

As President Xi Jinping has said, development is the foundation of security, and security is the precondition for development.

With this in mind, he proposed a holistic approach to national security in April 2014 that attaches equal importance to internal and external security, with Chinese people's security as the ultimate goal, political security as the fundamental task, economic security as the foundation, and military as well as cultural and public security as the means of guarantee; with diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation as the linchpins of its approach to create the strategic space essential for realizing its aspiration for national rejuvenation.

As the white paper on national security in the new era released by the Information Office of the State Council on Monday makes clear, holistic national security seeks to harmonize security imperatives with the country's development goal of becoming a modern socialist country by 2049.

Providing a comprehensive exposition of China's holistic approach to national security, the white paper shows the aim is to promote development, reform and stability domestically while seeking peace, cooperation and mutual benefit in its international relations and the building of a harmonious world.

National security is fundamental to development in all respects. It would be impossible for the Chinese people to lead a comfortable and decent life without public security. The country would be vulnerable to foreign invasion without a strong capability for national defense. Social stability would be impossible to maintain without internal political stability. And development would be stymied without a peaceful external environment.

National security and development therefore go hand-in-hand. Endeavors at preventing and defusing risks should serve to create a safe environment for development, and development should strengthen security.

When it comes to opening up, the white paper makes it clear that China's holistic approach to national security does not politicize the concept

of national security. Rather China has established a comprehensive and transparent legal framework for its domestic security environment and in opening its door wider it will follow international rules in maintaining security for its cooperation with other countries.

There are always differences between countries, and even if the differences or disputes cannot be resolved for the time being, the parties involved should seek ways to shelve them through talks while seeking common ground for cooperation and common development.

That is why whenever there is a military conflict, China calls for the parties involved to seek peaceful settlement through talks. And that is why, to pool international efforts to prevent military conflicts and wars, China has proposed the Global Security Initiative.

The GSI seeks to establish a fairer and more reasonable framework for global security governance by rejecting zero-sum games, absolute security and political alliances for confrontation.

The GSI is, in essence, China's holistic approach to international security.

As far as world peace is concerned, China has set a good example for the entire world. It has envisioned and proposed the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. In such a community, all countries should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, follow the principles of the United Nations Charter, and respect the reasonable security concerns of other countries.

The GSI also calls for global endeavors to fight against unilateralism and protectionism and pool global efforts to maintain a fair and just order for global economic development and common prosperity, as unilateralism and protectionism are factors creating insecurity for global trade and world economic development.

In reality, there is a close relationship between national security and international security. It is unimaginable for a country without political and social stability to provide a sound environment for international investment and business. In other words, no multinational company would take the risk of doing business in a country with social chaos and political turmoil.

China's holistic approach to both national and international security thus provides a way to reduce the global security deficit.

What They Say

European security framework core of Ukraine crisis

As the three-day truce Russia proposed concluded on Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday put forward a "full and unconditional" 30-day ceasefire plan starting on Monday, and said that his country is prepared to resume direct negotiations with Russia if Moscow accepts the ceasefire proposal.

Earlier on Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed resuming direct negotiations with Ukraine on Thursday in Istanbul, indicating a ceasefire agreement could be discussed during the proposed negotiations.

Kyiv made the proposal after a meeting between Zelensky and visiting leaders from France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom on Saturday. The European leaders said that if Moscow does not agree with the 30-day ceasefire proposal, Russia's financial and energy sectors will face new large-scale sanctions. Something the White House hinted it has given the nod to.

The 30-day ceasefire agreement was first proposed by US President Donald Trump. And the core content of the "ultimatum" that European countries put forward this time is consistent with Trump's "30-day ceasefire" requirement. In this way, the European leaders have tried to drag the United States to their side. They don't worry about Moscow's rejection as that will actually help them to realize the objective of driv-

ing a wedge between Moscow and Washington.

But Putin's response indicates he has chosen to brush aside the European leaders' threat, avoiding a direct confrontation with Europe, while keeping the door open for talks to woo the US sticking to its original practice of keeping Europe away from the negotiation table, since there is no reason for the US leader not to support direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.

Putin's move distracted the attention attracted by Europe's "ultimatum" and he focused part of the public opinion war on the Istanbul negotiation initiative. In response, Trump posted a positive evaluation on social media of Putin's initiative on Sunday.

In the past three months, the US' pressure has been mainly directed at Ukraine, and it has generally achieved its goal. Ukraine has signed a mineral agreement with the US and accepted Russia's core demand of not joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which the US had asked Kyiv to accept. Even on the issue of territory, the Zelensky government has shown flexibility, although it has clearly stated that it refuses to formally cede territory.

But none of the "breakthroughs" has actually touched upon the core issue of the crisis as they mainly serve the US' interest.

China advocates for and remains committed to the vision of common,

comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security at the global level, and believes it is important to take seriously the legitimate security concerns of all countries and eliminate the root causes of the Ukraine crisis.

China welcomes all efforts conducive to peace and looks forward to reaching a fair, lasting and binding peace agreement on the Ukraine crisis that is accepted by all relevant parties through dialogue.

The resolution of the crisis should not become a process for certain parties to exploit others for their own narrow interests. Otherwise, the peace that will be achieved will not only be short-lived but also become the launchpad for a new crisis in the future. If so, that means Europe will continually suffer from the lack of a lasting and effective peace mechanism paying a high price for the illusion that peace has returned.

Although the positions of the relevant parties are not fully aligned, they all hope to have a fair and durable peace deal that is binding and accepted by all the parties concerned. They also need to realize that no one wins in a conflict, but everyone gains in peace. The negotiation table is where the conflict ends and peace starts.

Although peace might bring about multiple wins, to end the conflict entails relevant parties making compromises.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

Corridor boosts L. America's tech partnerships

The fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum to be held in Beijing on Tuesday is expected to focus, among other things, on science. In fact, the two sides organized an event called the "China-Latin America and Caribbean Science Day" which was hosted by the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology in Beijing on April 23.

The milestone event on April 23, which marked a decade of progress under the China-CELAC Forum framework, highlighted the deepening collaboration between the two sides in science, technology and innovation, domains now recognized not only as engines of economic growth but also as pillars of sustainable development, mutual respect and global peace.

It is in this context that the concept of an "innovation-driven South-South technology corridor" has emerged, not merely as a framework for cooperation, but as a long-term diplomatic strategy that would strengthen scientific sovereignty, regional integration and technological resilience. The corridor represents a pragmatic and aspirational path forward for countries historically underrepresented in global science leadership, and it is through initiatives such as these that we can shape a multipolar, inclusive future for humankind.

The cooperation in science and technology makes it clear that science diplomacy is no longer confined to state-to-state dialogue; it is becoming a practice of mutual capacity building, co-creation of knowledge, and the collective response to global challenges.

The China-CELAC Forum is not a new partnership. It is the revitalization of ancient traditions of inquiry and invention that can, when connected through diplomacy, serve as the foundation for modern sustainable progress.

Among the organizations invited is the Andean Road Countries for Science and Technology, which has put forward a bold and unifying vision: the advancement of a regional paradigm of the Science Culture Construction. This initiative, anchored on the principle that science must be embedded in culture, education and governance, is fundamental to the maturation of any science ecosystem.

The ARCST, which brings together institutions and stakeholders from Latin America and other countries around the world, has positioned itself as a catalyst, a connector and "a bridge". It is fostering triangular cooperation between Latin America, Asia and global partners, and is working to ensure that research is not confined to elite institutions, but translated into community benefit,



Moreover, it empowers countries to negotiate grounded in shared priorities, local expertise and reciprocal trust. The corridor is as much about science diplomacy as it is about development.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

educational reform and technological entrepreneurship.

In this sense, Latin America's growing participation in China-led joint laboratories, research centers and training programs is not a passive reception of technology. It is a strategic investment in innovation diplomacy, which helps circulate knowledge, and adapts to and finds local expression.

The South-South technology corridor is now taking institutional shape. This is evidenced not only in the organization of events such as China-Latin America and Caribbean Science Day but also in the increasing number of scientific agreements, mobility programs, and collaborative projects that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This corridor brings new voices of the Global South and approaches to the global table. It allows regions such as Latin America to diversify their scientific part-

nerships and design context-specific solutions to problems ranging from the loss of biodiversity and energy transitions to urban planning and digital governance.

Moreover, it empowers countries to negotiate grounded in shared priorities, local expertise and reciprocal trust. The corridor is as much about science diplomacy as it is about development.

As a science diplomat, with more than 80 successful projects executed between China and Latin America, I saw the need to co-found and host joint laboratories with Chinese and other partners, encourage bilingual and multilingual scientific training programs, participate in collaborative funding mechanisms to promote innovation, support researchers and young scientists to engage in international exchanges, and foster ethical frameworks that guarantee the equitable use of technology.

The ARCST stands ready to assist in these efforts, offering a platform for dialogue, partnership and shared projects. Our (the ARCST's) vision is not only to close the scientific and technological gap between regions, but to lead, as well, in areas where Latin America possesses unique strengths, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge systems, agricultural heritage and community resilience.

Let us be clear, global challenges such as climate change, pandemics and resource scarcity cannot be met through isolated effort or unilateral policy. They demand coordinated action grounded in science, diplomacy and solidarity.

The China-Latin America and Caribbean Science Day was not a celebration of past achievements; it was a strategic signal of intent to shape a scientific future. It showed the world that China, Latin America and the Caribbean are ready to co-build a future where cooperation in science and technology is not a secondary concern, but a central element of foreign policy and regional development.

It is time to align our investments, policies and cultural narratives to elevate science as a cornerstone of international cooperation. Let the innovation-driven South-South technology corridor be our common path, not only toward sustainability but toward dignity, equity and global relevance as well.

It is not a corridor of asphalt or cables. It is a corridor of ideas, values and a shared future. We invite all who believe in the transformative power of science and diplomacy to join us.

The author is chairman of Andean Road Countries for Science and Technology, Bolivia. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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Thrift good for all, new generations should be taught

As a child, I was taught by my parents and teachers to be thrifty. Not a single grain of rice should be wasted on the dinner table. Worn-out clothes should continue to be worn even, if needed, after patching up. These were some of the advice I was given and I followed them because they came from elders and, more importantly, I had no choice but to live a frugal life.

Being an agrarian society for several thousand years, China almost always struggled to feed its people due to frequent droughts, floods, earthquakes, and war. To survive the disasters, mostly natural but also manmade, the Chinese people learned to be frugal and save for a rainy day. With the passage of time, frugality became second nature for the Chinese people.

During my childhood half a century ago, food was rationed. The fixed amount of ration given to households was not enough to meet the dietary or nutritional needs of most people, especially children and youths. Hunger was a reality for us. I clearly remember the night when all the boys in my school dorm woke up and began banging spoons on their rice bowls because they could no longer bear the pangs of hunger.

While we had to toil to fill our stomachs and learned to always save for a rainy day, the younger generations seem immune to such worries and necessities.

Growing up in those tough times, I know the value of food and practice frugality. So much so that thrift has become a "part of my genes". No wonder when President Xi Jinping said there was a rule in his family — both his parents were revolutionaries and, later, high-ranking officials — that not a single grain of rice should be left in the rice bowls, I readily related to it. In fact, all Chinese families at the time had the same rule.

It saddens me sometimes to think that my generation, or the generation after me, will be the last to believe in frugality. While we had to toil to fill our stomachs and learned to always save for a rainy day, the younger generations seem immune to such worries and necessities. Since food and consumer goods are abundant today — they can be delivered at your doorstep at the click of a few keys on your smartphone — the younger generations seem to think "thrift" is just a word from a dictionary of the past.

China has launched several "empty plate" campaigns to stop food wastage. Now, the central authorities have launched a new round of discipline inspection to deter officials from wasting public resources by organizing extravagant feasts, using government vehicles for personal purpose or traveling on government funds. The fact that many rounds of such campaigns have to be conducted to prevent food wastage indicates it is difficult to control, let alone end, wastefulness and corruption. The reason: most people today don't adhere to the tradition of frugality.

China's history tells us that whenever people abandoned the practice of thrift and indulged in extravagance, it faced a socio-economic crisis irrespective of how prosperous or powerful the country was. Fully aware of history, the central authorities are taking measures to ensure people remain true to the tradition of frugality.

But it is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade the new generations to practice thrift, because they are not worried about starvation now that quite a few can afford Louis Vuitton handbags, and luxury cars. In fact, to boost domestic consumption, governments at different levels have launched even trade-in programs to encourage people to get rid of their old household electrical appliances, cars and smartphones, and buy new ones at subsidized prices.

Although I know the higher authorities have reasons to promote the trade-in program, I still think the early disposal of the appliances is a waste of resources. I sincerely hope the disposed appliances find new homes and continue to serve households instead of being smashed into scrap.

It seems the meaning of thrift has changed from what it was during my time. But I believe the concept and significance of thrift remain the same. I hope we will develop into a society where wasting food is looked down upon and indulging in extravagance using public funds a crime.

Gianni Di Giovanni

China-EU green cooperation key to global climate action

One of the most promising areas for deepened cooperation between the European Union and China is green technologies. The EU has long been at the forefront of innovation in clean energy — pioneering developments in wind power, solar energy, and electric vehicles. China, meanwhile, has become the global manufacturing powerhouse capable of scaling up these solutions rapidly. Together, they can accelerate the global deployment of renewable energy technologies.

Consider the case of electric vehicles. China is the world's largest EV market, with companies such as BYD and NIO leading innovation and adoption. The EU, driven by stringent emissions regulations, is pushing hard to phase out fossil fuel vehicles. This creates a natural alignment for collaboration — not just in technology development, but in building out the necessary infrastructure, including EV charging networks and battery supply chains. Joint efforts can drive down costs, expand access to green mobility, and help lead the global automotive sector toward a cleaner future.

Renewable energy is another key area for partnership. China dominates in the production of solar panels, wind turbines and energy storage systems. The EU, aiming to vastly increase its renewable energy usage as part of its carbon neutrality targets, stands to benefit from closer collaboration.

China's large-scale manufacturing has significantly reduced solar energy costs globally, including in Europe. By deepening



Despite the challenges posed by geopolitics and trade tensions, the potential for China and the EU to lead the global decarbonization effort is immense.

ing this cooperation, both regions can further lower costs, enhance efficiencies, and make renewables the cornerstone of their energy systems. The EU can also contribute financial expertise and regulatory support to help de-risk large renewable projects in China, making them more attractive to global investors.

The EU operates one of the world's most developed carbon markets through its Emissions Trading System. China, having recently launched its national carbon trading scheme, is in the early stages of building a robust carbon pricing framework. This presents a strategic opportunity for both regions to align their carbon markets, creating more predictable global carbon pricing. Such alignment could catalyze investments in

low-carbon technologies and level the playing field for industries across both economies.

Ongoing dialogues between China and the EU on harmonizing carbon pricing mechanisms are crucial to ensure that industries are incentivized to reduce emissions and adopt sustainable practices.

To unlock the full potential of China-EU collaboration, both sides must optimize existing trade and economic dialogue platforms. These mechanisms are essential to overcoming trade barriers, mitigating geopolitical risks, and fostering effective cooperation in green technology sectors.

A practical step forward is the establishment of targeted bilateral agreements focused specifically on green technologies and decarbonization. Agreements promoting the exchange of clean energy solutions — such as wind, solar, and green hydrogen — can bridge technological gaps and ensure that tariff and non-tariff barriers do not hinder the flow of green goods and services.

The EU-China green cooperation initiative is a strong foundation, aiming to align both regions' green strategies and promote low-carbon technology exchange. Expanding this initiative to include concrete joint ventures, particularly in emerging areas such as carbon capture and energy storage, would further solidify this partnership.

Beyond tariffs, regulatory divergence presents a significant obstacle to industrial cooperation. Aligning environmental standards, product certifications, and

safety regulations between China and the EU would simplify cross-border trade, reduce protectionist tendencies, and enable businesses to scale green technologies more effectively.

A vital but often under-appreciated aspect of cooperation is knowledge sharing. Both regions boast leading universities, research institutions, and companies in the clean energy space. Expanding platforms for collaboration — through joint research initiatives, policy dialogues, or business exchanges — can deepen mutual understanding and drive innovation. Academic exchanges on renewable technologies or joint R&D on energy storage could lead to breakthroughs benefiting both economies and the global energy transition.

Despite the challenges posed by geopolitics and trade tensions, the potential for China and the EU to lead the global decarbonization effort is immense. By intensifying collaboration in green technology, harmonizing carbon markets, and enhancing dialogue mechanisms, both can forge a more sustainable, resilient future. Their partnership is not just crucial for their own prosperity, but serves as a powerful example of how nations can set aside differences to achieve shared climate goals.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

GLOBAL VIEWS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

Eighty years ago, the world was emerging from the most devastating war in history, which cost the lives of almost 80 million people. Fortunately, the Nazi, fascist and militarist forces were defeated by a large coalition of the allied countries that, at the end of the conflict, joined forces to create the United Nations. This institution has helped to reorganize the international order ever since.

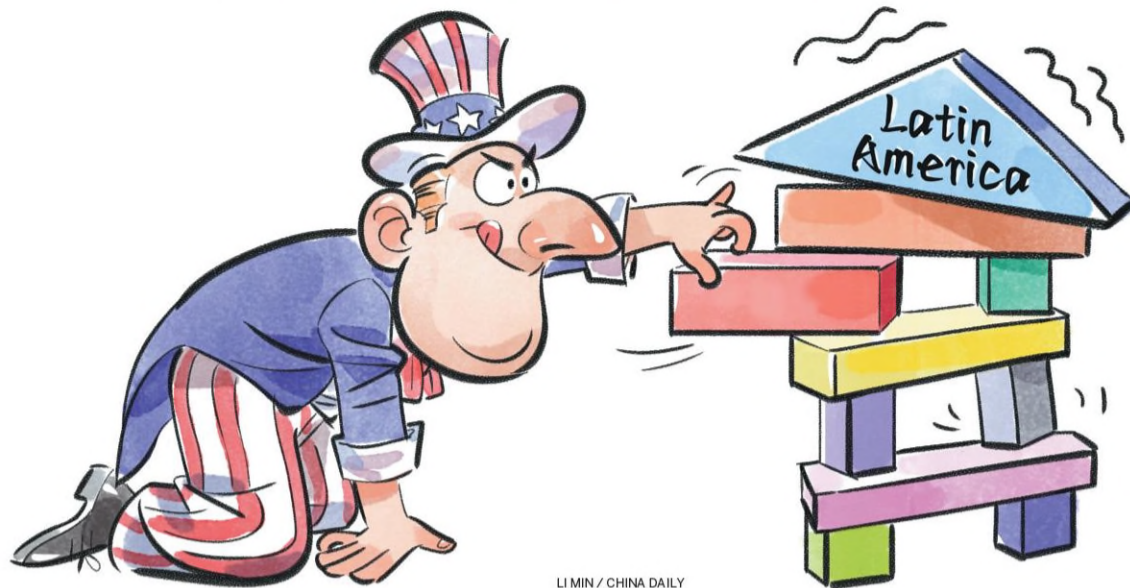
That year, the terror and commotion caused by the war gave way to an era of optimism, in which cooperation and respect for human dignity and the right to economic development would be the basis for building a new coexistence between nations. European colonialism began to crumble. In 1947, India became independent. In 1949, the victory of the Chinese Civil War occurred. In the following decades, people in Asia and Africa achieved national independence. But unfortunately, in 1947, the United States initiated a policy of containment of the socialist camp, mainly against the Soviet Union. Once again, humanity was on the brink of a devastating war, this time with the threat of a nuclear conflict between the superpowers.

In 1949, in the wake of a movement of hope for a more equitable world, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean was created. This UN body is responsible for designing economic theories and policies to support the region's development. Raúl Prebisch and Celso Furtado became known worldwide as the leading theorists of economic development theory. They formulated policies that inspired several countries to seek industrialization to overcome economic and social backwardness.

It is interesting to note that ECLAC was created despite the opposition of the US government, precisely when the Washington government was directing billions

Too many sticks, too few carrots

The US has deliberately failed its southern neighbors by derailing, rather than supporting their development efforts



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

of dollars to reconstruct Europe and Japan through the Marshall Plan. Many leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean imagined that the US government would support their development efforts, but this was an illusion. On the contrary, during the Cold War, the US intervened to stifle any government that could organize a national development policy. Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, among others, were overthrown by military coups supported by the Central Intelligence Agency under the pretext of fighting communism. During the 1950s, the US abandoned the "carrot" of Franklin Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," which ral-

lied most LAC countries to the allies during World War II, and adopted the "stick" to control what it called the Western Hemisphere, a geographical-turned-political term.

In 1961, in the first year of the John Kennedy administration, the US created a plan to undermine the influence of socialist ideas and the Cuban Revolution in Latin America, the so-called Alliance for Progress, a new "carrot". However, this initiative did not leave anything significant. Underdevelopment, social inequalities and income concentration continued to spread among countries in the region. From 1964, when Brazilian president João Goulart was deposed, US policy was to sponsor a lot of coups d'état and military

interventions, as occurred with the deposition of Juan Bosch in the Dominican Republic, Salvador Allende in Chile and Isabel Perón in Argentina. The authoritarian wave lasted until the end of the 1980s.

After the failed initiatives of the Free Trade Area of the Americas under the George W. Bush administration in 2002 and Growth in the Americas during Donald Trump's first term in 2019, the Joe Biden government in 2022 held the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, at which the US announced a new "carrot" by creating the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity. This initiative promised to attack the causes of underdevelopment, poverty, violence and social ine-

qualities in Latin America and the Caribbean. The proposal had as its backdrop the so-called nearshoring, that is, the reorganization of global production chains toward the US neighborhood to welcome companies that would be forced to withdraw their activities from China and Asia. During the Biden government, two meetings were held, in 2023 and 2024, but nothing tangible was presented. When looking at the portfolio of projects financed by the International Development Finance Corporation, no significant investment was found that could economically transform the region's countries. With Trump back in power, the US has stopped offering carrots and is only using sticks to achieve its goals. The problem of

illegal immigration is being solved (at least in theory) by severely repressing the Latin American population. The first wave of tariffs hit Mexico, along with Canada, hard. The announcement of generalized tariffs for all countries has also hit the other countries in the LAC region. The pressure on Panama is reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt's gunboat policy over a hundred years ago.

An interesting aspect of the US policy toward the region concerns China. US Secretary of State, Cuban-American Marco Rubio, is visiting countries in the area to pressure them to distance themselves from the Asian country, arguing that the Chinese presence is a threat to hemispheric security. However, Rubio ignores the fact that Latin American and Caribbean countries need opportunities to overcome their backwardness, something that the government in Washington ignores. It is important to emphasize that China keeps its market open for countries in the region, encourages infrastructure projects through the Belt and Road Initiative, and strongly contributes to the energy transition through investments in clean energy or installing an electric vehicle industry. Furthermore, China does not impose conditions or use a carrot-and-stick policy to pursue its interests.

In the current situation, where blackmail has become a new form of diplomacy, Latin American and Caribbean countries must find new paths that benefit their populations. In this sense, the China-CELAC Forum, which is being held in Beijing, will be a unique opportunity to advance cooperation and seek new ways to keep the global economy open and inclusive.

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ZHOU ZHIWEI

An outdated path to nowhere

US policy toward LAC is gravitating strongly toward the logic of the Monroe Doctrine

From "America First" to the strategic orientation of a zero-sum game, as well as the tactic of the tariff stick, Donald Trump's second term has subverted the existing rules of economic globalization and global governance. Every move and utterance

of his administration epitomizes US hegemonism. As the region geographically closest to the United States, Latin America

will inevitably bear the brunt of the US' bullying diplomacy. Its cooperation with China will also be impacted, primarily in two key dimensions. First, the US administration's policy toward Latin America is likely a revival of the Monroe Doctrine. Over two centuries, the doctrine has evolved to encapsulate several critical objectives, including safeguarding against potential security threats, excluding extraregional powers, upholding the US hegemony, and constructing a hemispheric alliance system. Some US conservatives hold that regional cooperation within Latin America and engagement with extraregional countries undermine many of the US' interests in the region.

Second, the US administration's approach to Latin America is starkly marked by its propensity to leverage power and coercion. For instance, it has coerced Panama into withdrawing from China's Belt and Road Initiative, ratcheted up sanctions on Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, and leveraged tariffs to pressure Mexico into making continuous concessions on border management with the US. Judging from these actions, it appears that the US may intensify coercive tactics when pursuing US interests on the continent.

In a recent interview with Fox, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth remarked that the policy missteps of the Barack Obama administration had enabled China to make

significant "inroads" in Latin America. He emphasized that the US must reclaim its "backyard". While Hegseth's comments reflect a broader sentiment within the US Cabinet, they conspicuously disregard the three fundamental facts that have underpinned the rapid progress of China-Latin America relations.

The first is the increasing self-reliance of Latin American nations. Since their independence, these countries have prioritized the pursuit of sovereign independence and policy autonomy, a goal that is especially conspicuous in their relations with Washington. Since 1898, when the US was growing to be a global hegemon through the Spanish-American War, resisting US neocolonialism has been a crucial agenda for Latin America in defending its sovereignty and striving for autonomy. In this process, Latin American countries have not only actively explored various paths for regional integration but also worked hard to advance a diversified foreign policy. For example, during the Cold War, these countries pursued independent and autonomous foreign policies. At the dawn of the new century, they established the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which excludes the US. Strengthening cooperation with China aligns with the new trends of international cooperation and represents a choice of diplomatic autonomy for Latin American countries. It also serves as an effective means for them to counterbalance the US. Thus, the US administration's attempt to reassert hegemony is structurally at odds with the growing self-reliance of Latin American nations. In a sense, the US policy of treating Latin America as its "backyard" is nothing more than wishful thinking.

The second is the robust endogenous momentum of China-Latin America cooperation. The strategic anxiety of the US toward China-Latin America cooperation primarily

originates from China's highly efficient economic and trade collaboration with the continent. However, the efficiency of cooperation is based on the significant economic complementarity between the two sides. This complementary relationship is not only evident in the trade structure but also in the supply and demand dynamics in investment. It is based on the shared aspirations of China and Latin America for economic globalization, industrial structure upgrading and enhanced modernization, rather than an economic policy aimed at "de-Americanization". It is certainly not bloc cooperation targeting the US. The declaration of the third Ministerial Meeting of the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (China-CELAC Forum) in 2021 explicitly underscored the continuous deepening of a new era in the China-Latin America relationship that is equal, mutually beneficial, innovative, open and people-oriented. Given the vibrant and dynamic nature of China-Latin America economic and trade cooperation, it is challenging for the US to achieve its goal of coercing Latin American countries to decouple from China.

The third is the shared vision of China and Latin America on the international governance system. Judging from the declarations of the past three ministerial meetings of the China-CELAC Forum, both sides share a common vision in supporting globalization and multilateralism, and opposing power politics and unilateralism. This fully reflects the nature of a China-Latin America community with a shared future.

Porting the US policy toward Latin America is marked by a pronounced protectionist and unilateralist inclination, coupled with a conspicuous absence of substantive cooperation initiatives. In this context, China and Latin America should deepen their collaboration, transforming challenges into stra-

tegic opportunities. China-Latin America cooperation has the following advantages.

First and foremost, the appeal of China's diplomatic principle of pursuing the greater good and shared interests is poised to grow in Latin America. The US administration's actions exude an imperialist arrogance, trampling on the hard-earned rights to autonomy that Latin American nations have pursued since their independence two centuries ago. In stark contrast, China-Latin America relations have consistently adhered to the principles of equality and mutual benefit. Moreover, China's open and inclusive posture resonates more closely with the policy aspirations of Latin American states.

Second, China-Latin America economic and trade cooperation remains highly predictable. According to my calculation, between 2014 and 2023, the average annual growth rate of China-Latin America trade reached a robust 8.5 percent, significantly outpacing the 4.8 percent of US-Latin America trade. The vibrancy of China-Latin America trade is markedly superior. Should the US impose additional tariffs on Latin American countries, it could potentially accelerate the trade facilitation negotiation process between China and some Latin American nations. China has already signed free trade agreements with five Latin American countries. If the US fails to provide more investment and aid to Latin America, the expectations of Latin American countries for investment from China will only rise further. Overall, Latin America is suffering from low economic growth and increasing challenges in national governance. In this context, the open and efficient cooperation between China and Latin America is more aligned with the international cooperation needs of regional countries.

Third, multilateralism serves as the cornerstone of China-Latin America cooperation. Both sides are staunch defenders and benefi-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

aries of multilateralism. Since Trump's return to the White House, the US has once again engaged in a series of withdrawals from international bodies and agreements, severely disrupting the multilateral order. Amid this situation, China and Latin American countries should resolutely defend multilateralism, enhance the coordination of their positions, and deepen cooperation on global issues such as climate change, sustainable development and poverty reduction. Together, they should jointly address the impact brought about by the US' unilateral actions. The year marks another occasion for the China-CELAC Forum to update its agenda. Both sides should fully lev-

erage the platform to advance all-round cooperation, while supporting Latin American nations in forging regional consensus, enhancing regional governance capacity, and defending their rights to independent development.

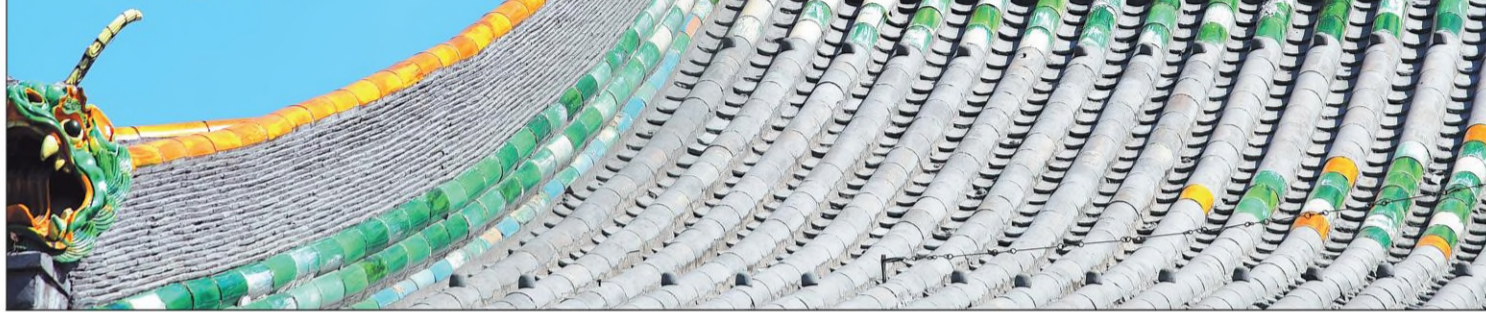
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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:56 PM

CULTURE

Taking snapshots of heritage

History enthusiast records the treasures of the past to give them a wider audience, **Yang Yang** reports.



A *chiwen* component on the roof of Chongfu Temple, in Shuozhou, Shanxi province. *Chiwen*, a mythical creature, is said to be one of the nine sons of the dragon, and becomes a common architectural component in ancient Chinese buildings. BY WANG HUILIAN FOR CHINA DAILY

On a cold morning in March 2016, Wang Huilian, 36, once again approached the gate where once stood the pagoda of the Jingzhi Temple in Dingzhou, North China's Hebei province.

On the ground, nothing of the ancient temple is left, but underground, the seven-square meter palace still has delicate murals and an architectural structure that showcases the genius of craftspeople during the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Palaces under Buddhist pagoda foundations are used to settle and enshrine relics, texts and various types of utensils.

In 977, treasures, including *sariras* and more than 700 artifacts crafted from gold, silver, bronze, jade, stone, wood and silk — like gilt-silver reliquaries and Ding kiln masterpieces — from Northern Wei (386-534) to Song dynasties were secretly buried, sealed and stored in the underground palace of the Jingzhi Temple pagoda. It was not until nearly 1,000 years later that they were finally brought to light.

People can see those exquisite artifacts in Dingzhou Museum but few have the chance to see the underground palace.

Wang, an office worker and history enthusiast living in Beijing, 220 kilometers away, had come here many times, always finding the gate locked without a person in sight.

But on that March morning, without much expectation, she saw a middle-aged lady sweeping the ground with a broomstick. Wang did not hesitate to introduce herself and the reason for being there: "I'm an enthusiast of historical sites. I'm here to see the famous underground palace?"

The woman ignored her, focusing on her work. Wang did not give up. She started to tell the woman of her previous visits.

"I said, this is the first time I see someone here, so I'm too excited. Sorry if I talk too much, but she replied coldly, 'I'm just a cleaner. I don't have the key to the underground palace. Please leave. I'm going to lock the gate.'" Wang says.

Wang still did not want to give up. She continued telling her how many times she had been there, her knowledge about Dingzhou's history, the disappearing pagodas and the great poet Su Shi from the Song Dynasty, who was demoted to Dingzhou's governor in 1093 due to political struggles.

While talking, Wang picked an extra broomstick in the yard and began sweeping the ground together with the woman. "I didn't expect anything, just wanted to share my stories with her."

But when they finished cleaning the yard, the woman asked her to follow her and opened the door leading to the underground palace. In the following years, Wang went to the temple several times, the gate was always locked and she never saw the woman again.

It is one of the most unforgettable experiences that Wang had in the last two decades during her trips to about 10,000 historical sites



A view of Shibaozhai, a pagoda carved into the cliffs and rocks and perch atop a hill, in Zhongxian county, Chongqing. BY WANG HUILIAN FOR CHINA DAILY



Wang Huilian travels extensively to historical sites, including a cluster of centuries-old architecture (left) in Huangping county, Guizhou province, and Cishan Temple (right), Baoji, Shaanxi province.



Wang Huilian's book, *Youshengzhinian Yidingyao Kande 1,001 Ge Zhongguo Guji*, spotlights historical sites across the country that are worth a visit. It contains high-definition photos that record ruins, ancient tombs, grottoes and rock carvings. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

around the country, one of the many stories in which she changed people's mind with sincerity.

That is how she got the chances to take photos of those historical sites that are not open to the public. Many of the photos are included in *Youshengzhinian Yidingyao Kande 1,001 Ge Zhongguo Guji* (The 1,001 Chinese Historical Sites You Must See Before You Die), a book by Wang that was published in March.

According to geographical location, Wang introduces in the book 1,001 historical sites across the

country that are worth a visit on four grounds: historical significance, cultural representatives of various dynasties, aesthetic value, and clues for exploration.

The 960-page book contains a total of nearly 2,000 high-definition photos that record 105 ancient ruins, 119 ancient tombs, 612 ancient buildings and 112 grottoes and rock carvings, all taken by the author.

Historical sites derive significance from their authenticity as temporal witnesses. In the book,

readers can find 396 photographs documenting monuments since altered, lost, or reshaped by environment. It also includes rarely documented visuals, seldom presented in digital archives, each reflecting Wang's meticulous effort to immortalize heritage while still possible.

"With rich travel experiences and unique insights, the author provides distinctive interpretations for each historical site," says Shi Manlin, the book's editor with Xiyuan Publishing House.

"Not only does she showcase their external appearance, but also presents their historical stories, cultural significance and social value with professional materials."

"This approach allows readers to feel as if they are traveling through time and personally experiencing the changes that these historical sites have witnessed," Shi says.

"Besides, the book also recommends surrounding historical sites that are not at the national level and can be visited along the way," she adds.

Commenting on the book, Shang Heng, researcher from the Beijing Institute of Archaeology, says that if the 5,058 national key cultural relics protection units are considered the essence of Chinese cultural relics, then the 1,001 selected in this book are the cream of the crop.

Growing up at the foot of the Bell and Drum Towers in Beijing, Wang became interested in cultural relics at a young age. In 2000, when she was a sophomore studying human resources management at university, at a friend's invitation, she went to Qingling village in the capital's Changping district, which sits next to the Ming imperial tombs.

At that time, the Ming imperial tombs were still in disrepair. "Standing in front of the Qingling Stele Pavilion, I was immediately drawn to the broken tiles and ruins, as if I had traveled through time," she says. It was that glimpse of beauty that solidified her passion for history and culture, and inspired her to explore and experience them in the following years.

The first historical sites Wang visited were the wild sections of the Great Wall on Beijing's outskirts — Jiankou, Simatai, Jinshanling and Mutianyu. On the social network platform popular at the start of the 21st century, QQ, Wang found a group of people with similar passion — hiking through the wild sections of the Great Wall.

In free time, carrying a tent, water and some bread, Wang walked 30 km a day. In the evenings, she and the fellow hikers pitched the tents on the Great Wall, watching sunsets and sunrises, enjoying pure happiness.

Gradually, Wang expanded her visit to farther places. In Hebei's Cangzhou, she visited the Iron Lion that was crafted in 953, and saw it before the current shelter was built.

Visiting historical sites has become an important part of Wang's life that she has been pursuing for more than two decades.

"I love it because I'm always touched by those historical sites that have been standing there for centuries," she says.

"Just imagine all they've endured — centuries of storms, dynastic upheavals, natural erosion, human vandals, year after earthquakes. Yet these ancient structures still stand resilient, radiating timeless beauty to every visitor fortunate enough to encounter them. In their presence, life's worries appear trivial."

Contact the writer at yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

Smart farming turns desert into oasis

URUMQI — In the arid hinterlands of Northwest China, where barren expanses dominate the landscape, a high-tech greenhouse is defying local harsh conditions, producing vibrant greens and sweet strawberries year-round with minimal water and zero pesticides.

The smart farm built last May in Kuqa of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region with funding from Ningbo, Zhejiang province of East China, uses hydroponics and automated climate control to grow leafy greens and strawberries unaffected by the dry, dusty surroundings of the Taklimakan Desert, the world's second-largest shifting sand desert.

The indoor farm of nearly 7,000 square meters is part of China's push to modernize rural economies through tech-aided agriculture with Xinjiang, where deserts cover 25 percent of the land as a key testing ground.

Inside the plant factory, rows of spinach, lettuce and ruby-red strawberries thrive under glass, their roots bathed in nutrient-rich water instead of soil. Sensors adjust temperature, humidity and irrigation automatically, while workers monitor data dashboards — a far cry from traditional farming in this snow-melt-dependent region.

Local farmer Eli Kerim has a part-time job there, managing roughly 0.27 hectares of strawberries. His daily work has gone beyond physical labor such as pruning and picking to monitoring growth data and conducting necessary analysis. "The work here expands my skills and knowledge, and I frequently consult with our technicians whenever I have a problem," says the 29-year-old.

"We tailor crops to market demand. Our first strawberry harvest sold out instantly," says Zhang Yaping, manager of the greenhouse. The greenhouse provides 26 jobs and is expected to boost annual incomes by 40,000 yuan (\$5,554) per worker while paying 700,000 yuan in collective rent and sweet equity dividends to a local village a year.

Li Xiandong, an associate professor at the College of Economics and Management of Xinjiang Agricultural University, sees broader potential. Such smart agricultural facilities could significantly increase the planting area and yield of crops and help drive the industrial upgrading of the surrounding areas, he says.

At another agricultural demonstration zone in northern Xinjiang's Changji Hui autonomous prefecture, leafy vegetables like amaranth are planted in 10-layer vertical racks that can rotate 360 degrees, ensuring crops absorb sunlight evenly and efficiently increasing the utilization of space. For climbing plants such as tomatoes, vines sprawling as long as 13 meters are hung over a rope beneath the glasshouse ceiling and roots are immersed in nutrient solutions, maximizing their exposure to sunlight and fertilizer.

Senior agronomist Yan Ji stands on a hydraulic vehicle that can be lifted vertically or moved laterally on a rail, thus allowing him to easily prune side stems and leaves, or harvest tomatoes. "Here we do most of our work in a standing posture, and seldom bend at the waist or squat for a long time," he says. "High-tech relieves us of heavy manual labor."

Yan notes that the factory's cultivation uses a reasonable combination of artificial and natural light, a mix of nutrients based on scientifically determined proportions, and an isolated environment that reduces the impacts of diseases and pests. "As a result, our tomatoes are of fine quality, enjoy higher yields and sell at better prices," Yan says. According to him, the harvest season lasts from October to July, with a daily output exceeding 300 kilograms.

In recent years, Xinjiang has attached great importance to the development of facility agriculture, including smart farming. As of 2023, the region had more than 1.2 million facility agriculture units, involving a vegetable plantation area exceeding 44,600 hectares in total, according to local department of agriculture and rural affairs.

LIFE

Received by NSD/EARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:59:16 PM
TCM plantations are herbal remedy for communities

A t a newly opened herbal tea stall tucked inside Fuwang, a traditional Chinese medicine clinic in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Li Rongjie focuses intently on measuring out herbal ingredients ranging from slices of astragalus plant root and sun-dried ginseng to goji berries. Li mixes and matches them in various portions intended for such effects as boosting immunity and aiding sleep.

"I am brewing two types of tea, and each blend contains many herbs. The formulas are provided by the doctors in the pharmacy," Li, in his 20s, says.

Once he finishes preparing the raw materials, he carefully simmers the Chinese herbs. "After bringing them to a boil, they need to cook for at least another one to two hours for the best concentration," he says.

The TCM tea has attracted many health-conscious customers of different ages.

Tang Huitian, founder of the TCM hall, says that these innovative beverages are all inspired by classic TCM prescriptions, such as those from the 16th-century encyclopedic book on herbology *Compendium of Materia Medica*.

"They preserve the medicinal efficacy of the ingredients while appealing to customers' flavor preferences," Tang notes.

Tang, who has practiced TCM for about four decades, says he notices the increasing popularity in TCM among modern consumers and works with Donglan county in Hechi city to grow special herbs to satisfy market demand.

A four-hour drive from Tang's facility, swathes of *meadowrue corydalis* root stretch freely across plots of land surrounded by mountains in Hongli village in Donglan. The herb is



Above: A plantation growing *meadowrue corydalis* root, a herb for easing inflammation in Hongli village. **From top right:** Visitors try traditional Chinese medicine cuisine at a food street in Donglan county. Villagers harvest *meadowrue corydalis* root in Hongli village. A child tastes a TCM dish during an event in Donglan county. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Innovative health teas not only benefit patients, but also the villages and people where the ingredients are planted, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

known for easing inflammation.

Once a battleground for the Red Army in the 1920s and '30s, this land is now redolent of medicinal herbs grown by ecological farming.

Huang Zhiying, a village official who oversees the TCM plantation, points out that a lot of knowledge and care goes into every step.

The journey begins around June every year, when the seeds are carefully dried and sown. It takes nearly a month for the seedlings to grow tall enough for the next critical phase — transferring them into nutrient cups.

"Seedlings are very delicate," Huang notes. "Sometimes, even after a week, you barely see any growth. It can take one or two months before they really start to come up," she explains.

This early stage happens inside specially prepared seedling sheds, where conditions like sunlight and temperature are carefully controlled — a necessity for the fragile young plants.

"Seedling cultivation isn't something you can rush. Without proper shelter and care, it simply won't work," she adds.

Around September or October, the mature seedlings are ready to be transplanted into the fields where



Experts check TCM ingredients in Hongli village, Donglan county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY

the soil has to be plowed in advance, raised into ridges, covered with film, and then perforated for planting.

"We raise the soil into rows for better root development and make sure the excess water can drain through the small ditches we dig," Huang explains.

An irrigation system runs through the fields using a shared pipeline to deliver clear water or nutrient solutions, depending on the plants' needs.

After planting, farmers must continuously monitor soil moisture, fertilize appropriately, and protect the young plant from pests and harsh weather. The entire cycle, from seed to harvest, stretches more than half a year.

Yet, most villagers deem the toil as a blessing.

Wang Xiuyu, in her 50s, began working in medicinal plant cultivation around 2019, when the opportunity first arose.

She recalls that before the introduction of medicinal herb farming, the villagers mainly grew rice, which

only provided seasonal income.

After the rice harvest, there was not too much other agricultural activity, and fields often lay fallow due to water shortages and unsuitable weather conditions.

Many villagers, including Wang, had to leave home to find temporary jobs, leading to temporary family separations.

The arrival of the plantation brought a new source of stable income. Wang estimates she can earn around 10,000 to 20,000 yuan (\$1,380-\$2,760) annually from it.

As soon as the *meadowrue corydalis* root is harvested in May, the villagers begin planting rice, says Wei Zhongfu, a senior expert in agricultural science.

The base adopts a "herb-grain" rotation model — the *meadowrue corydalis* root is sown in November and harvested by May, after which the land is immediately returned for rice cultivation — seamlessly transitioning from medicinal herbs to staple crops.

"This model effectively doubles land-

use efficiency," Wei says.

Additionally, the loose soil and ample nutrients left behind by the herbal crops help repel pests and crop diseases and increase yields.

Meadowrue corydalis root is just one among many other herbs that have thrived in the village.

With a forest coverage rate exceeding 86 percent, a warm, humid climate, and selenium-rich soil, Donglan is home to more than 768 species of medicinal herbs, including highly prized varieties.

"Leveraging these natural advantages, the county is committed to the principle that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, positioning TCM as a key pillar for development," says Pan Huakai, deputy head of the county.

In recent years, Donglan has adopted a three-pronged strategy combining ecological cultivation, intensive processing, and cultural tourism focused on health preservation.

Under the guidance of the Three-Year Action Plan for TCM Industry Development (2023-25) issued by the county government, Donglan

rolled out a series of policies to support the industry, from special funding to a full supply chain system.

It is expanding into wellness tourism by creatively blending local agricultural products such as black glutinous rice and chestnuts with traditional medicinal herbs. The county has developed over 200 medicinal dishes and seven wellness teas, achieving a total output value exceeding 10 million yuan, Pan says.

The county has welcomed approximately 867,100 visitors, generating 940.8 million yuan in tourism revenue in the first quarter, according to county authorities.

"The environment here is ideal, with abundant mountains and dense forests. The climate is favorable, often shrouded in mist, creating natural conditions remarkably similar to the wild. As a result, the medicinal herbs we cultivate grow in an environment similar to their natural habitat," explains Tang, the TCM hall founder, of his decision to build TCM plantations in the county.

To date, every species the plantation grows has a guaranteed demand from a partnered company, and farmers' incomes are secured through contract pricing, says Tang. "Once our base matures, we aim to expand this model to other areas, encouraging farmers to utilize their idle forest lands for medicinal herb cultivation and supporting rural vitalization," Tang says.

Tang expects production and sales will continue to grow as more well-known TCM brands, like Tongrentang, will come on board.

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Tourism market finds thrilling experiences the new destination

Standing beside the emerald waters of the Dulong River in Southwest China's Yunnan province, Beijing-based traveler Li Li closes her eyes and allows the crisp mountain air to fill her lungs.

"I didn't come here just to check off a bucket list item," she says. "I wanted to live here, even for just a few days, to share stories around a Lisu ethnic group's fire pit and the walk trails untouched by crowds."

Li's decision to trade iconic landmarks for a slower, more culturally grounded experience reflects a broader transformation sweeping China's travel sector.

This year's five-day Daxi Day holiday, which concluded on May 5, highlights a clear shift — more Chinese travelers are moving beyond traditional sightseeing.

Instead, they seek immersion; deep, personal experiences that blur the line between observer and participant.

Data from the tourism platform Tongcheng Travel highlights this trend. While major cities like Beijing and Shanghai remain popular destinations, long-distance domestic travel surged westward, dominating flight bookings. Over half of top travel routes are connected to southwest provinces like Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Chongqing municipality, as urban professionals leave skyscrapers for misty peaks and open grasslands.

Even locals from the Sichuan capital of Chengdu headed further west, flying to Lhasa to experience the allure of the Xizang autonomous region.

According to travel platform Piggy, bookings for lesser-traveled destinations like Beitun in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Qamdo in Xizang, Golong in Qinghai province, and Nujiang in Yunnan surged by over 100 percent year-on-year.

Analysts at the Tongcheng Research Institute credit China's



Parachuting is increasingly popular for visitors to Sanya, Hainan province. There is a growing demand among tourists for more immersive holiday experiences. GUO CHENG / XINHUA

western appeal to upgraded infrastructure and a rich array of natural and cultural experiences, such as mountains, lakes, deserts and grasslands that promise the authenticity

that today's travelers crave.

This rising preference for "slow travel" is not just in numbers, but in intention. Many travelers are rejecting fast-paced, checklist-style tourism

in favor of meaningful encounters.

In Qingchuan county, Sichuan, visitors capture rare and precious encounters with wild takins (Himalayan bovines) through their camera lenses. In Lincang, Yunnan, crowds gather for the Wa ethnic festival, joyfully smearing one another with natural pigments, a gesture of blessings and shared joy.

Even historic sites are reimagining the way they engage tourists. At the ancient Guanque Tower in Shanxi province, tourists can interact with costumed actors who reenact Tang Dynasty (618-907) scenes, turning classical poetry into an immersive performance. In Wuzhu, Anhui province, a 104-year-old customs house has been digitally revamped with AR exhibitions.

For others, immersion takes to the skies. He Jixu, a tourist from Sichuan, took his first helicopter ride in Sanya, Hainan province. "Seeing the ocean from above was surreal, like

the world expanded," he says.

Wang Xiaoling from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region pushed her limits even further by trying skydiving. "The second I jumped, fear turned into awe," she recalls. "It wasn't just fun; it changed how I see risks and myself."

These high-adrenaline experiences are catching on fast. An extreme sports club in Sanya reported a 70 percent surge in skydiving bookings during the holiday, fueled largely by younger travelers.

For a growing number of Chinese tourists, the era of passive sightseeing is giving way to something deeper. Travel is no longer just about seeing the world; it's about stepping into it.

"Ten years ago, I would've rushed to tick off the must-see sites," says Li Li, the traveler from Beijing. "Now, the 'musts' are the moments you never plan for."

LIFE

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From left: Chinese crime drama *A Gilded Game*, Marvel's latest superhero film *Thunderbolts** and Japanese anime classic *Princess Mononoke*.

Film market sees revenue plunge

Box-office takings fall more than 50 percent over the year, **Xu Fan** reports.

As the year approaches its midpoint, China's film market seems to be pausing for a brief "halftime" break — slowed by a recent sluggish performance but expected to be poised for a stronger comeback in the second half.

Combined with the May Day holiday receipts, this year's overall box office has reached 26.5 billion yuan (\$3.67 billion), with more than half of the cumulative revenue contributed by *Ne Zha 2* during its run since Spring Festival.

The animated hit has extended its theatrical release to May 31. Its highly anticipated sequel, *Ne Zha 3*, will take around five years to produce, reveals Wang Changtian, chairman of Beijing Enlight Media Co, the major investor of the *Ne Zha* franchise, during a recent conference organized by the China Film Administration.

Despite nine new movies being released during the five-day May Day holiday — a major box-office season — the holiday concluded with 747 million yuan in total box-office revenue, the lowest in eight years and decreasing 51.1 percent year-on-year, according to a report released by the Maoyan Research Institute.

Topping the holiday charts is actress Ma Li's biopic *The Dumpling Queen*, inspired by the touching story of Zang Jianhe — a divorced woman who raised two young daughters by selling dumplings on Hong Kong streets and eventually became a business legend as the founder of the popular food brand Wanchai Ferry. The film earned 192 million yuan during the festival.

Coming in second is Hong Kong megastar Andy Lau's *A Gilded Game*, a financial crime drama that sheds light on the shadowy corners of the investment banking industry and stock market. It grossed 134 million yuan.

Taking the third spot is Japanese master Hayao Miyazaki's award-winning anime feature *Princess Mononoke*, followed by director Yi Xiaoxing's comedy *The Open Door* in fourth place, with the two movies respectively bringing in 69 million yuan and 65 million yuan.

Originally released in Japan in 1997, *Princess Mononoke* is regarded as one of Miyazaki's greatest works, known for its profound allegory exploring the conflict between human civilization and the natural world. This marks the first time the classic — released in both Mandarin and Japanese versions, with actress Zhao Liying voicing the titular role in the Mandarin edition — has been screened across Chinese mainland theaters.

Marvel's latest superhero film, *Thunderbolts**, which gathers an unconventional team of anti-heroes for a dangerous mission, ranked as the fifth highest-grossing holiday film, followed by the comedies *I Grass, I Love* and *Ne Zha 2*, which placed sixth and seventh respectively on the festival box-office charts. *Trapped*, a crime thriller which won two Tiantan Awards at the 15th Beijing International Film Festival, somewhat disappointingly came in eighth.

Although the May Day holiday performed unsatisfactorily in ticket revenues, it still had some highlights, such as new movies being used to boost tourism in some areas, says Rao Shuguang, president of the China Film Critics Association.

For instance, *I Grass, I Love* — released on May

1 — has inspired locals to create themed travel routes titled "follow the movie to travel". As a road comedy, the film follows a veteran driver and an aspiring rapper on a 5,000-kilometer journey from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region to Hunan province. In Hunan's Qingxi village, where a picturesque spring farming scene was filmed, tourists with the movie's tickets receive discounts and can participate in activities that re-create memorable moments from the film.

"Chinese film market is currently undergoing profound and irreversible structural changes. Audiences are evolving, while micro-short dramas, concerts and tourism are competing for viewership in an unprecedented way. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence is reshaping every aspect of film production and the industry landscape," Rao says.

According to a report by Beacon, Alibaba Pictures' film data analytics arm, the proportion of theatergoers under 24 plummeted to just 17 percent during this year's May Day holiday — a dramatic drop from 38.4 percent during the same period in 2021.

Lai Li, a veteran analyst at Maoyan Research Institute, reveals that their report shows the under-20 demographic now accounts for less than 10 percent of movie audiences — the lowest ratio on record — while the share of audiences aged older than 35 has grown steadily for four consecutive years.

"The film market is losing its core young demographic," observes Beijing-based critic Yuan Yun'er, highlighting industry concerns as cinema celebrates its 130th anniversary while seeing its appeal wane among younger viewers.

"This shift stems from multiple factors, including pandemic-altered entertainment habits and declining film quality," she adds.

On the review platform Douban, the highest-grossing films during the May Day holiday have received comparatively lower ratings: *The Dumpling Queen* scored 6.6 points, *A Gilded Game* 6.3, and *The Open Door* 6.6.

In contrast, *Princess Mononoke* has maintained an impressive 8.9 points.

"No matter what, Chinese filmmakers must remain confident and stay true to their original aspirations. Domestic creators need to continuously enhance artistic capabilities, imagination and creativity, while better understanding the evolving preferences of audiences and market trends," says Rao.

Lai says the upcoming two major box-office seasons — Dragon Boat Festival and the summer vacation — have already scheduled multiple highly anticipated offerings, such as Chinese animated film *Endless Journey of Love*, American film *How to Train Your Dragon* and domestic costume comedy *The Litchi Road*.

"Overall, the upcoming film slate for the remainder of the year boasts a robust lineup with diverse genres and themes, including several tentpoles. We anticipate these forthcoming releases will achieve stronger market performance, drawing audiences back to theaters and delivering delightful cinematic surprises," says Lai.

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A scene from the biopic *The Dumpling Queen*, the highest-grossing film during the May Day holiday. It has topped the country's single-day box-office charts for two consecutive weeks.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Traditional art troupes embrace scenic spots, boost cultural tourism

LANZHOU — During the May Day holiday, a scenic area in Northwest China drew visitors seeking to explore its ancient way of life, dating back more than 1,000 years.

Li Longfei, a 38-year-old local opera performer dressed in official Song Dynasty (960-1279) attire, was playing the role of a county magistrate hearing cases outdoors, with this scene surrounded by an engaged audience that laughed and nodded along with the performance.

Notably, this immersive experience took place in a restored ancient architectural complex at Huanzhou Ancient City in Huanxian county of Gansu province, which combines dining, historical costume rentals and cultural performances.

Initially hesitant about street performances, Li has since grown to appreciate them. "Performing here creates a more authentic Song Dynasty atmosphere and introduces our opera to tourists nationwide," Li says.

"During holidays, I give multiple daily performances. It's tiring, but incredibly rewarding."

Traditional opera artists like Li once went through a lean time, when this troupe staged fewer than 50 performances a year, barely covering salaries, partly due to competition from other arts and online entertainment.

Luckily, the burgeoning trend of integrating culture and tourism has brought new opportunities for performers such as Li. In 2021, Huanxian county developed Huanzhou Ancient City, centered around its iconic Song Dynasty brick pagoda — a historical landmark.

The county has also restored military heritage sites from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and integrated these sites into a tourist attraction, where visitors can traverse ancient towers, command platforms and plank roads.

To enrich the tourism experience further, this spot provides food and catering services, allowing visitors to savor in northwestern culinary delights, such as mutton soup and buckwheat noodles. In addition, traditional cave dwellings draw a significant number of tourists keen on experiencing this Northwest China lifestyle.

The team in charge of operations at this spot recognized that enabling tourists to experience traditional customs and arts would be a fantastic attraction — and this initiative has opened up promising opportunities for local opera troupes.

Currently, Li's troupe integrates local folk operas, including Qinqiang Opera, and shadow puppet shows into its performances.



Local opera performers stage a show in a restored ancient architectural complex at Huanzhou Ancient City in Huanxian county of Northwest China's Gansu province. XINHUA

A renowned Chinese folk tale depicting eight immortals crossing the sea, their magic has been adapted into an interactive opera performance.

Visitors can get up close and personal with actors, while audiences also have opportunities to dress up in costumes and engage in improvised interactions with the performers. They can even help shape the

progression of the plot.

Beyond traditional opera performances, the troupe's actors feature in dramas, song-and-dance shows, and serve as quiz show hosts. They have also created an immersive situational performance based on the story of renowned politician Fan Zhongyan, who led to build fortifications and trained troops at this location 1,000 years ago.

In this show, the actor portraying the commander, dressed in a robe, performs in front of an ancient-style tower, while soldiers wearing black armor and carrying long spears line up.

"Upon entering the ancient city, I am immediately immersed in an engaging experience. There are countless performance scenes," says tourist Mu Chunni.

"My favorite is the shadow puppet show. It takes me back to the joy experienced in earthen cave dwellings during my childhood."

These days, Li's troupe performs 300 shows and earns 3 million yuan (\$415,800) annually, and they are planning to recruit more opera actors and dancers.

Hu Shiwen, director of the tourist center at Huanzhou Ancient City, says that the county has capitalized on the increased public appetite for experiential and interesting cultural tourism by combining local history, art, cuisine and cave dwellings to offer a rich tour experience.

During the 2024 Spring Festival, the ancient city drew over 100,000 visitors, generating revenue exceeding 38 million yuan.

Across the country, local art troupes are getting involved in tourism. This follows a good push to combine culture and tourism, making travel more enjoyable and

helping people better experience Chinese culture.

Northwest China, mainly covering provincial-level regions of Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang, boasts profound history and diverse culture. To facilitate the integration, some local governments have also implemented subsidies as incentives for troupes to perform regularly at tourist destinations.

For example, a troupe in the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi province has responded by integrating dances from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) and Tang Dynasty (618-907) with ethnic music, to create *The Heart of Kashgar*, a resident performance item in Xinjiang's Kashgar Ancient City. This performance depicts ethnic exchanges along the Silk Road, a network of trade routes connecting China and Europe dating back more than 2,000 years.

Such integration of troupes and tourist spots not only enriches artistic forms but also provides a stage for preserving traditional opera and folk customs, while satisfying consumer needs for an immersive and distinctive cultural experience, says Zhang Lintao, an official of the provincial culture and tourism department.

XINHUA

Golden opportunity

Foreign trade companies secure policy push to tap home market
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Israeli forces launch fresh Gaza offensive
WORLD, PAGE 6



Scaled perfection

Book artist captures through work roots of Eastern thought
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, MAY 19, 2025

Xi extends congratulations to 34th Arab League Summit

President Xi Jinping sent a message on Saturday to Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, the rotating chairperson of the Council of Heads of the League of Arab States, extending his congratulations on the convening of the 34th Arab League Summit in Baghdad, Iraq.

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ity in the Middle East. He said the world is undergoing rapid changes unseen in a century, and the situation in the Middle East is evolving in a complex way. The Arab countries' adherence to independence and autonomy, promotion of development and rejuvenation, and safeguarding of fairness and justice have all played an active role in advancing the influence of the Global South, Xi said. He noted that the vigorous development of relations between China

and Arab states in recent years has set an example of unity and cooperation among developing countries. Xi said that he and Arab leaders agreed to engage in building a China-Arab community with a shared future for the new era at the initial China-Arab States Summit held in December 2022, and he believes that the second summit, which will be held in China in 2026, will mark another significant milestone in the history of China-Arab ties. Noting that China and Arab countries have consistently viewed their relationships from a strategic and

long-term perspective, Xi said that looking ahead, China will remain a trustworthy friend and partner for them, standing firmly on the side of the just cause of Arab states. China is willing to work with Arab states to deepen political mutual trust, push mutually beneficial cooperation, increase people-to-people and cultural exchanges, join hands on their respective paths toward modernization, and build a higher-level China-Arab community with a shared future, he added.

XINHUA

VISIONARY PATHWAY | BUILDING BEYOND HISTORY

Preservation of Gulangyu sets high mark

Conserving vibrant island's natural beauty, cultural heritage has long been Xi's priority

By XU WEI, ZHANG CHUNYAN and HU MEIDONG in Xiamen

careful preservation of both the island's natural beauty and its cultural heritage.

At the heart of the island of Gulangyu's Bagua Mansion, Ian Wakeley, a pipe organ engineer from Australia, leans over a sprawling theater organ, his hands moving with precision as he and his team work to assemble the intricate musical instrument.

Every piece, every detail, is meticulously placed as the organ takes shape — one of the 70 organs housed in the famed pipe organ museum on the island, which is located off the coast of Xiamen, a city in southeastern China's Fujian province.

For the past two decades, Wakeley has been installing and repairing organs in locations across the island, each one adding to Gulangyu's reputation as a haven for music and history.

The island, also known as Kulangsu in the local dialect, has been widely acclaimed as a living monument to the fusion of Western grandeur and Chinese heritage.

"For me, this isn't just about restoring an instrument," Wakeley said. "It's about preserving a legacy."

"I look back after 20 years since the first organ went in, and it makes me very happy to be part of that history on the island. The island's history is a fusion of the East meeting the West. It has always had a special feel — the architecture, the buildings, the people. It's all very welcoming."

Wakeley's dedication to the preservation of Gulangyu's musical legacy is part of a broader, sustained effort to protect the island's rich historical fabric. This effort, which began decades ago, has been championed by many individuals, but no one has been as instrumental as Xi Jinping, who, as Xiamen's vice-mayor in the 1980s, set the course for the island's preservation.

In the 1980s, when Bagua Mansion, a cornerstone of Gulangyu's appeal, was in a state of disrepair, and the city was looking to refurbish the red-domed building and turn it into a city museum, Xi earmarked a special fund of 300,000 yuan (\$41,600) to support its renovation efforts.

Xi's leadership was instrumental in the creation of the 1985-2000 Xiamen socioeconomic development strategy, which highlighted the importance of Gulangyu as a "national treasure".

The plan, which dedicated a special chapter to Gulangyu, called for

Xu Jinmin, an official with the Administrative Committee of the Xiamen Gulangyu-Wanshishan Scenic Area, said the strategy, compiled by a team led by Xi, elevated the importance of the island to an unprecedented height and paved the way for its wide-ranging preservation efforts.

"The strategy set the tone for the preservation and development of Gulangyu over the following decades," he noted.

Another important measure taken during Xi's tenure in Xiamen was the island's recognition by the State Council, China's Cabinet, as a National Scenic Area in 1988, paving the way for its enhanced conservation.

The island's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017 was the culmination of years of work, much of it set in motion by Xi's vision for the site.

Following the UNESCO recognition, President Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, again stressed the need to carefully safeguard the cultural heritage left by ancestors and better carry forward the nation's historical legacy.

"The application for UNESCO World Heritage status is aimed at better protection and utilization. It is essential to summarize successful experiences, draw on international concepts, and improve long-term mechanisms," he said.

Wakeley, who has made more than 30 trips to the island, praised Xi's unwavering commitment to the preservation of Gulangyu and its cultural treasures.

"For the leadership to say this is important, and (that) we must preserve and protect cultural heritage — that's very important, not just in China, but for any country," he said.

Cai Wanxia, an analyst at the Fujian Academy of Social Sciences, noted that the preservation of Gulangyu exemplifies Xi's dedication to protecting national cultural treasures. "It also serves as a vivid embodiment of his thoughts on cultural heritage protection," she said.

See *Gulangyu*, page 3



Online See more by scanning the code.

Ravaged land



Rows of damaged homes can be seen after a tornado struck St. Louis, Missouri, on Saturday. Violent storms sweeping through the Midwest and South of the United States have killed at least 27 people so far, including 18 in Kentucky. A number of families have been left homeless by the storms and thousands of vehicles have been damaged. LAWRENCE BRYANT / REUTERS See story, page 7

China-Brazil agricultural partnership benefits both

Accompanying Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva during his recent visit to China was an important delegation representing Brazil's agricultural sector. This large agribusiness presence was not surprising.

China is the world's largest importer of food, and Brazil is its main supplier, accounting for 25 percent of all agricultural products the country imports.

While China leads in food imports, it is also a major producer of grains, especially wheat, corn and rice. Due to limitations in availability of arable land and water, China produces relatively less amount of soy, thus relying heavily on imports.

Brazil has become a strategic partner in this context, with soy-

WORLD WATCH By Paulo Bertolini and Larissa Wachholz

bean accounting for more than 60 percent of the country's agribusiness exports to China.

Other major exports include meat and cellulose, while corn is gaining ground. Sorghum and pulses such as beans and sesame also show strong potential.

The agribusiness ties are complementary and mutually beneficial. Brazil contributes to China's food security by supplying grains for animal feed, supporting the country's rising demand for protein. Meanwhile, the Chinese imports fuel rural economic development in Brazil.

Both countries share the challenge of feeding growing populations sustainably. Increasing food availability is a priority for China, as outlined in its current five-year plan. Meeting this goal while preserving natural resources and reducing environmental impact requires improvements in agricultural productivity. Technology and biotechnology are key in this journey.

Between 1976 and 2024, Brazil doubled the area used for grain cultivation, while the total production increased sevenfold, reflecting a threefold rise in productivity.

According to the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock, without technological advances, Brazil would need more than 278 million hectares of ara-

ble land to produce what it currently achieves on just 81.6 million hectares.

Brazil's production of genetically modified crops is second only to the United States, with soy, corn, cotton, sugarcane and eucalyptus planted over 56 million hectares. In the 2022-23 crop season, adoption rates reached 99 percent for soy and cotton, and 98 percent for corn.

Biotechnology is also believed to have led to a decrease in the need for pesticides, critical in tropical agriculture. CropLife Brasil data shows a reduction in pesticide use by 35 percent for soy, 16.2 percent for summer corn, 16.4 percent for winter corn, and 27.5 percent for cotton.

See *Agribusiness*, page 3

PRESSURE OF GAOKAO SUCCESS LOOMS OVER STUDENTS' NEW WEEKEND FREEDOM

Step to enforce two-day break sees mixed response of anxiety, relief

By ZOU SHUO zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn



The recent enforcement of a two-day weekend break policy for high school students in China has sparked a wide-spread debate, and a mix of reactions including relief, anxiety and resistance among students, teachers and parents.

Some argue it is a much-needed opportunity for stressed students to recharge their batteries, while others fear it will only hinder academic

progress in regions with fewer educational resources. In the past, it was common for high school students to take classes during the weekend in preparation for the all-important national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*.

However, after the new semester began in early spring, students in multiple provinces including

Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Hunan and Guangdong can now enjoy two-day weekends.

Since April 11, the Ministry of Education has publicly punished a number of high schools in Hebei, Jiangsu and Henan provinces for having classes during weekends. The punishments follow a 2022 guideline issued by the ministry reiterating that high schools should not organize classes or tutoring sessions during weekends.

See *Weekend*, page 2

Lost treasures return



Workers unpack a box containing the remnants of an ancient Chinese silk manuscript at Beijing Capital International Airport on Sunday. The second and third volumes of the manuscripts were returned during a handover ceremony in Washington, DC, the US. The manuscripts, as the earliest silk text discovered, were illegally taken to the US in 1946. LI HE / XINHUA

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PAGE TWO

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Weekend: Students' well-being a priority

Third-year students study during an evening self-study session at a high school in Handan, Hebei province, on May 28, 2024. HAO QUNYING / CHINA DAILY

FIRST PERSON

Challenge to break free from old habits

Long Hongxia, education professor at the School of Marxism, Xiangtan University in Hunan province.

The call for "reducing academic burdens" for primary and secondary school students in the education sector has persisted for many years. Whether at the national level, among educators (theorists or front-line teachers), or parents, there is a collective weariness toward students' endless, round-the-clock studying.

Deep down, there seems to be a shared desire for change. This relentless grind, which monopolizes students' time and space, not only violates the laws of education but also harms their physical and mental health, stifling the cultivation of innovative talent.

Yet, modern society urgently demands innovative talent — so much that innovation has been elevated to a matter of national security, independence, and national pride. Phrases like "serving the nation through academic research" exemplify this mindset.

The recent national enforcement banning weekend remedial classes for high school students, following the prohibition of off-campus tutoring, is a step toward loosening the constraints on education, allowing it to return to its essence. This is a positive move.

A critical issue is that education remains tethered to career prospects rather than holistic well-being and fulfillment of people's lives."

Li Hongxia

Life should be holistic and diverse. Devoting all time and energy to studying is a form of alienation, narrowing and flattening what should be a vibrant endeavor aimed at enriching life and fostering well-rounded development.

Reducing education to a single goal is a distortion that must be corrected. Of course, education has never existed in a vacuum. Throughout history, it has often been shaped by external objectives — such as the stereotype in Chinese history of scholars becoming rigidly bookish.

Yet, a balance must be struck. Prolonged studying not only stifles creativity and reinforces rigid thinking but also harms physical health — contributing to issues like poor eyesight, posture problems, physical weakness, a lack of resilience or courage in boys, and weakened problem-solving skills.

The real challenge lies not in the courage or desire for change but in determining how to break free from entrenched habits. What comes next? Will students simply stay home glued to their phones? Will schools and families find covert ways to continue excessive tutoring, exacerbating social stratification as wealthier families invest in private lessons?

This requires collective effort from families and society, supported by systemic reforms. A critical issue is that education remains tethered to career prospects rather than holistic well-being and fulfillment of people's lives.

Transforming this mindset demands ideological shifts and institutional reforms. Under the current college entrance examination system, achieving true balance between work and rest remains a complex, ongoing challenge. Progress will require coordinated efforts across all sectors of society.

Li Hongxia talked to Zou Shao.

From page 1

Three high school administrators in Henan have been removed from their posts, four schools in Jiangsu have had their honorary titles removed, while several schools in Hebei have been excluded from receiving awards for three years, all for policy violations.

The change, also aimed at countering the culture of excessive competition, has exposed the challenges in balancing educational equity, students' mental health, and the rigid demands of the *gaokao*.

The *gaokao* system, which prioritizes test scores for university admissions, remains the new policy's greatest challenge. Schools and parents equate long study hours with success, and in regions where students have relied on weekend classes to offset resource gaps there is wariness about the two-day weekend break.

Proponents of the enforcement, however, argue it aligns with broader educational reforms to nurture "well-rounded" individuals. They believe weekends can help students rediscover joy in activities such as sports and art — experiences crucial for emotional resilience. Research also suggests that adequate rest improves cognitive function, potentially boosting long-term academic performance.

Under pressure

Lou Binyixuan, an 18-year-old art student in Changsha, Hunan, embodies the paradox of the policy for seniors.

Her school recently shifted from a one-day break every two weeks to one day off every week — a change she welcomes but is reluctant to fully embrace.

Despite the extra day off, she chooses to still spend it studying. "I don't want to study on my day off, but I have to because I want to go to a good university," she admits.

Her dream of attending Chongqing University hinges on her final scores in the *gaokao*, a pressure that drives her to spend her "free" day at school self-study sessions.

"If I sleep in, I feel guilty — like I've wasted time that could've been spent catching up," she explains.

"The reason that there are different tiers of universities means those who go to the good ones can enjoy better future development, so I am very motivated, but sometimes also lazy."

Lou's classmates are equally torn, she said. While some prioritize rest, others follow her routine.

"Out of 48 students, maybe 10 come to school on weekends. The rest stay home, but I doubt they're relaxing. Everyone's terrified of falling behind," she said.

She reserves her sharpest criticism for her school's defiance of national holiday norms, such as its granting only one day off during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday.

"They forced us to 'self-study' at school while other students enjoyed their break. I want to study, not be forced to," Lou said.

However, for Long Qianxun, a 16-year-old freshman in Changsha, Hunan, the enforcement has been transformative.



Students from a high school in Jinan, Shandong province, engage in group discussions in the psychology class, on Oct 24. ZHANG YUWEI / XINHUA

Students have a party to relax before taking the *gaokao* at a high school in Ji'an, Jiangxi province, on May 14. LI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Now, with two days off on the weekend, she sleeps until 10 am, attends a two-hour math tutoring session, and unwinds at family outings. "With more rest on weekends, I am now more energetic during weekdays," she said.

Her parents confiscate her mobile phone before midnight, so she cannot stay glued to it.

Even though she also wants to go to a top university, Long does not want to engage in aimless competition with her classmates, which makes her unhappy.

"Before, a student with top grades would cry in class or say she 'wanted to die' from the stress. This frightened me," she said.

While Long is not among the top students in her class, she believes she can gradually catch up. However, more important than grades are physical and psychological well-being, a sentiment her parents agree with, she added.

Teachers' perspectives

Many teachers have championed the policy's potential to heal what they see as a broken system.

Deng, a Chinese teacher from Zhengzhou, Henan province, said the policy, which was implemented on March 20 at her school, allows non-seniors to rest at home, while seniors can voluntarily stay on campus for self-study.

Although students' after-school pressure has decreased, the shortened class hours haven't resulted in reductions of the curriculum. Some students find the weekends too relaxing and struggle with self-control, while others feel the time off is just right, she said.

For ordinary families, the *gaokao* remains a critical opportunity to change their children's fate. However, prolonged studying risks causing anxiety, physical strain, and even illnesses like depression, said Deng, who chose to use one name.

Students most-affected by the enforcement are mid-to-lower achievers lacking self-discipline and parental supervision who are likely to slip further behind, while self-motivated students can adapt well, Deng said.

"At my school, students now balance leisure and study more openly. They return refreshed, sharing weekend experiences, which boosts mental health," she said.

Deng said her feelings about the policy were divided.

"While we tell students grades aren't everything, the reality is scores define their future. For ordinary families, grades are everything," she said.

Lan, a high school teacher from Shuozhou, Shanxi province, expressed strong support for the policy.

At his school, junior grades have adopted two-day weekends, but seniors still follow a 1.5-day break every two weeks.

Lan, who preferred to use one name, said many parents have resisted the policy, complaining their children "waste time on phones at home".

They prefer keeping their children at school and "out of sight, out of mind", he said.

"As a front-line teacher, I firmly believe dual rest days are urgently needed. Students operate like machines, and nearly every class has several students who've developed psychological issues or dropped out due to academic pressure. Rest allows them to 'feed their souls', explore passions and reconnect with nature," he said.

Despite the need for students to

recharge their batteries, schools compete fiercely for limited resources, measuring success by *gaokao* rankings. This culture of spending excessive time studying — fueled by institutions like Hengshui High School Hebei in Hebei province known nationwide for its strict study regimen — must end, he stressed. "Learning should be part of life, not its entirety," he said, adding all students crave free weekends.

Lang Shiyuan, an English teacher from Changsha No 1 High School in Hunan said his school introduced the policy around the third week of the semester, and banned organized classes on weekends.

Students now voluntarily study in open classrooms. Some parents worry because top students in other regions still study on weekends, he said. "Personally, I support the policy. Teachers can finally get more rest," he said.

While grades may dip, the policy benefits holistic development and identifies truly capable learners, he said.

He hopes it continues despite some short-term pains.

Ethics, legal aspects

The two-day weekend policy, though imperfect, marks a pivotal shift toward valuing students as humans, not just exam-takers, experts said. China's schools aren't just changing schedules — they're reimagining what it means to learn, live and thrive, they said.

Wang Ming, a researcher at the China National Institute of Educational Sciences, told the Paper.cn that extending students' school hours and organizing holiday makeup classes to study for college entrance exams directly violate regulations, and contradict the principles of lawful, standardized school operations.

Chu Hongqi, a professor at Beijing Normal University's Institute of Education and Social Development, said high school two-day weekends are legally and ethically justified.

In 1995, the State Council, China's Cabinet, mandated a five-day school week for primary and secondary school students. There are also policies explicitly prohibiting schools from organizing makeup classes during weekends, holidays, or vacations, he said.

Chu said weekend rest is a legal right and no entity or individual can infringe upon it. Schools, families, and stakeholders must collaborate to ensure students' adequate rest and sleep, he said.

Liu Changming, former principal of Beijing No 4 High School, highlighted the need for two-day weekends. "Excessive academic pressure, prolonged study hours, and cut-throat competition deprive students of sleep, exercise, and free time, leading to burnout, psychological issues, and emptiness syndrome, which stems from a lack of purpose," he said.

Without adequate free time to explore life, society, nature, or their own interests, students cannot develop goals or autonomy. Restoring moderate leisure time and decision-making power to high schoolers is crucial, he said.



Students toss their "adult hats" into the air at a coming-of-age ceremony in Jiaozuo, Henan province, in March. XU HONGXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

TOP NEWS

Nation set to deepen ties, mutual trust with Tunisia

Tunisian President Kais Saied met with Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, who led a CPC delegation on a visit to Tunisia from Wednesday to Saturday.

During their meeting on Thursday in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, Li first conveyed President Xi Jinping's cordial greetings to Saied and recalled that in May 2024, the two heads of state jointly announced the establishment of the China-Tunisia strategic partnership, drawing a new blueprint for the development of bilateral relations.

He highlighted that China stands ready to work with Tunisia to implement the important consensus reached by the two leaders, carry forward the two countries' traditional friendship, consolidate political mutual trust, strengthen exchanges of experience in governance and administration, and jointly promote the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road for more mutually beneficial results.

China is willing to deepen cooperation with Tunisia in cultural, academic, tourism, media and other fields, enhance exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, closely coordinate and cooperate in international and regional affairs, and promote the steady and long-term development of bilateral ties, Li added.

Saied asked Li to convey his sincere greetings and best wishes to Xi, saying that Tunisia attaches great importance to developing relations with China. He also spoke highly of China's development achievements and its critical role in international affairs, thanking China for its support in Tunisia's economic and social development.

Saied emphasized that Tunisia adheres to the one-China principle and supports China's efforts in achieving national reunification and safeguarding its core interests.

He said that Tunisia is willing to deepen the alignment of its development strategies with China, and strengthen cooperation in various fields such as economy and trade, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, healthcare, and infrastructure construction.

During his visit, Li also met with Tunisia's Prime Minister Sarra Zaafrani Zenzri, Parliamentary Speaker Ibrahim Bouderbala and President of the National Council of Regions and Districts Imed Darbali.

XINHUA

Received by NSD/EARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM



Performers in ethnic attire dance in a parade on Sunday to celebrate ethnic unity in Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou province. Held on the eve of China Tourism Day, the parade comprised 26 formations with nearly 3,600 participants, creating an audio-visual feast of diverse local cultures. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Gulangyu: Seamless blend of old, new praised

From page 1

"Walking into Gulangyu, while we appreciate its precious historical and cultural heritage, we can also genuinely feel the vibrant atmosphere of this historic international settlement," Cai said. "This fully demonstrates the foresight and long-term vision of President Xi in protecting cultural heritage."

UNESCO describes Gulangyu as "an exceptional example of the cultural fusion" resulting from Sino-foreign exchanges that began when the island first became an international settlement in 1903.

Gulangyu stands out for its vibrant colors, particularly the striking contrast between the red hue of the brick buildings and the lush surrounding greenery.

"The vivid red against the greenery creates a visually stunning effect, making the island's landscape particularly distinctive," said Shi Jianguang, a professor at Xiamen University's School of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

Shi led a team of experts that oversaw the restoration of Bagua Mansion, the third renovation in its 117-year history — a project that started in July 2021 and was completed in February 2024.

He credited Xi's leadership for preserving the island's original architecture, especially Bagua Mansion.

"His strong support helped ensure that the island's streetscapes, buildings and overall aesthetic remained true to their original form," Shi said.

The restoration of key buildings on Gulangyu, including Bagua Mansion, has been carried out in a way that remained faithful to the original style and characteristics, he added.

For architects, the restoration of the landmark buildings was like "dancing with shackles on," as they made every effort to ensure authenticity, reversibility and minimal intervention during the restoration process, Shi said.

"As a result, when you walk through Gulangyu today, you encounter the same sights and atmosphere as in the past, with no significant changes from what they were decades ago."

Modern monitoring technology has also played a key role in Gulangyu's preservation.

Cai Songrong, director of the Gulangyu Cultural Heritage Monitoring Center, said the technology allows for real-time monitoring of the island's buildings. "A key feature of the system is its ability to use the internet to control the frequency of patrols," he said. "We conduct inspections twice a day, ensuring that any changes are caught quickly."

In 2024, the island received 9.22 million visits by tourists, who took an eight-minute ferry ride from downtown Xiamen to explore Gulangyu's beaches, winding lanes and rich architecture.

Scott Harrison, an Australian visitor, said he fell in love with Gulangyu on his first trip to Xiamen.

Gulangyu's charm lies in its seamless blend of old and new, he said. "In Gulangyu, the historic buildings are not only appreciated, but also beautifully preserved and presented," he said.

With sound preservation efforts now put in place, officials have also stressed the need to ensure that the communities on the island, which is also known as Piano Island because it features a large piano museum, can continue to thrive.

Xu, the official with the scenic area's Administrative Committee, said measures are being taken to prevent the permanent residential population from declining, including improving education and healthcare access for residents.

"If there are no residents left on Piano Island, who will play the piano in the future?" he asked.

Xu highlighted innovative solutions such as drone delivery of medicine to elderly residents and the establishment of community cafeterias and express delivery stations to improve quality of life on the island.

"Without these people, the cultural traditions of this place cannot be passed down," he said. "Only when people stay in the community does the cultural heritage remain alive."

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Global trade order faces changes

China and other major emerging economies to play bigger role, international economists say

By ZHOU LANXU in Shenzhen, Guangdong, and LIU ZHIHUA and TAN GUOLING in Beijing

As tariff policies of the United States challenge the global trade order, the world might build a new multilateral trade system and see reshuffling of the international monetary architecture, in which Europe and emerging markets such as China could play a bigger role, leading international economists said.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Michael Spence said the US has shown an anti-multilateral posture under the current administration, marked by its withdrawal from the World Health Organization.

With that, structural changes may unfold in the international trade system, he said. While there could be different scenarios ahead, the most likely one is that Europe as well as China and other major emerging economies will sponsor a process that results in a reasonably functional, practical and workable multilateral system.

That could happen even in the absence of US support, though the process could be messy, Spence said. Such a scenario would not have worked 25 or 30 years ago, but is likely now as emerging economies have expanded their

share in the global economy.

"I think we're going to still have a multilateral system because the major players, other than the US, are big, powerful and committed to having a workable multilateral structure," he said, adding that it would be possible for the US to rejoin the system.

While the post-pandemic era has brought rapid changes, Spence said he doesn't think this will derail the process of trying to make a practical, somewhat more complex version of multilateralism work, because that would benefit all parties and be essential in addressing global challenges such as climate change.

Spence made the remarks in a video address to the 2025 Tsinghua PBCSF Global Finance Forum, which was held over the weekend in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. The forum, organized by Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance, was themed "A Shared Future: Building an Open and Inclusive Economic and Financial System".

Speaking at the forum, Marek Belka, former prime minister of Poland, pointed out that US tariff policies bring instability to the global economy and may present a paradox regarding the US dollar.

Belka said the US, on the one



I think we're going to still have a multilateral system because the major players other than the US are big, powerful and committed to having a workable multilateral structure."

Michael Spence, Nobel Prize-winning economist

hand, may favor weakening the dollar to rebuild its industrial competitiveness, but, on the other hand, it also has an interest in maintaining the greenback's position as a leading global reserve currency.

Due to the instability caused by US trade policies — which Belka referred to as a "dangerous play with tariffs" — capital has started to flow out of dollar-denominated markets, a trend that can gradually erode the dollar's role as a global reserve currency, he said.

"In the fixed income space, we are just at the beginning of an adjustment in the portfolio of central banks and institutional investors, which I think will lead to a

gradual decrease of the share of the US dollar in (global reserves)," said Massimiliano Castelli, UBS Asset Management's head of global sovereign markets strategy and advice.

While the lack of alternatives would mean there would not be an imminent demise of the US dollar as the dominant reserve currency, Castelli pointed to the potential for the euro and the renminbi to receive more funding if there is diversification away from the dollar.

"I think the potential is there (for the renminbi)," he said, adding that key limitations of the yuan's international role include the fact that it is yet to be fully convertible, as well as China's low interest rate environment.

Hu Xiaolian, former chairwoman of the Export-Import Bank of China, said the global monetary system is evolving toward greater diversity and inclusiveness, with more currencies expected to play a role in the international monetary landscape.

She pointed out that local currency settlement among emerging market economies is becoming increasingly common, and alternative currencies are now being used in commodity pricing and transactions, as well as for safeguarding regional financial stability.

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Factory fire



Firefighters try to put out a fire at Kumho Tire's largest factory on Saturday in Gwangju, South Korea. One employee and two firefighters were injured in the blaze. The fire allegedly broke out during the process of mixing chemicals with rubber. YONHAP PHOTO

Agribusiness: Tech cooperation, regulator dialogue can accelerate risk assessment

From page 1

Less use of pesticides means less fuel consumption and fewer machine operations. Together with gains in land efficiency, this contributes to a reduction of 70.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to planting 504 million native trees. These improvements strengthen the sustainability of Brazilian soybean exports to China.

For biotech and solutions to reach farmers safely and efficiently, greater regulatory alignment is needed between producing countries such as Brazil and major importers.

Currently, Brazil can export a genetically modified crop once it has been approved by Chinese reg-

ulatory agencies. The approval typically takes around five years after the product has been authorized in Brazil.

This creates a bottleneck in the adoption of innovation. Strengthening technical cooperation in biotechnology and encouraging dialogue between regulators and scientists from both countries can enhance scientific understanding between the two partners and speed up the regulatory risk assessment process.

While China's genetically modified crop management system should be respected, accelerating the approval timeline would allow farmers in Brazil early access to new technologies that support productivity, environ-

mental conservation and lower emissions.

Greater regulatory convergence between Brazil and China should be a shared goal. It would bring clear economic and environmental benefits to agricultural trade. This topic deserves special attention in high-level dialogues between the two countries.

Paulo Bertolini is president of Abramfilho — the Brazilian Association of Corn and Soybean Producers. Larissa Wachholz is a partner at Vallya Participacoes and was a special adviser to Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply between 2019 and 2021. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Received by NSD/EARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 07:40 PM

CHINA

Chinese military radar systems set up to attract foreign buyers at Hefei expo

By ZHAO LEI in Hefei
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China Electronics Technology Group Corp, one of the world's largest suppliers of defense electronics, is showcasing several export-ready radar systems with what it describes as world-class capabilities at the ongoing 11th World Radar Expo.

The event opened on Saturday in Hefei, capital of Anhui province. The State-owned defense conglomerate is using the platform to promote radar systems developed by its 38th Research Institute, based in Hefei.

"We have brought the JY-27V high-mobility meter-wave air surveillance radar, the JY-11 three-face low-altitude surveillance radar, and a new type of S-band road-mobile multi-functional radar to the expo, aiming to show them to potential customers," said Xu Haizhou, a senior radar expert at the institute.

All three systems were designed for export and outperform similar products on the international market, Xu said.

"The JY-27V has a lot of features that we are proud of, including outstanding detection accuracy and range, its smart processors, high mobility and quick response time," he said.

“Our clients have successfully used it to defend against incoming drones and HIMARS rockets.”

Xu Haizhou, senior radar expert at the China Electronics Technology Group Corp

Each JY-27V unit includes a radar vehicle and a control cabin, which can also be mounted on a vehicle. The system's large antenna array can be unfolded and folded within minutes, allowing for rapid deployment and repositioning on the battlefield — an advantage that improves both survivability and operational flexibility, Xu said.

The radar can detect and track multiple targets simultaneously, and is expected to become the best meter-wave air surveillance radar on the global market once it receives government approval for export, he added. Several foreign militaries have already expressed interest in the system.

Xu said the JY-11 radar has

already been sold to several countries in the Middle East and has performed in live combat situations.

"It is good at detecting, identifying and tracking drones, and can guide other weapons to intercept them. It features the longest detection range among all Chinese anti-drone radars," he said. "Our clients have successfully used it to defend against incoming drones and HIMARS rockets, and they have spoken highly of its performance."

Established in 1965, the 38th Research Institute is a leading radar research and development center of China Electronics Technology Group Corp, and is one of a few institutes in China capable of designing advanced military radar. Its products have been deployed by military forces in more than 20 countries, with the JYL-1 air surveillance radar being the most widely used, according to Xu.

In another development, China's J-10C fighter jet has recently become a hot topic among military and weapons enthusiasts around the globe in the wake of media reports about its first combat scores. It is reported that the J-10C brought down several fighter jets without any loss of its own.

Launch of 1st mission to take samples from orbiting asteroid announced

By ZHAO LEI
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China's first asteroid sample-return mission, Tianwen 2, is scheduled for launch within the next two weeks from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province, according to the China National Space Administration.

The Tianwen 2 robotic probe was moved to the launch preparation area at the center on Sunday morning to undergo prelaunch functional checks, the administration said in a brief news release.

The spacecraft was transported to the mountainous spaceport in late

February for fueling and extensive examinations. Its carrier rocket, a Long March 3B, was moved to the launch preparation area on Wednesday, the CNSA said.

According to mission planners, Tianwen 2, the country's second interplanetary expedition, will target 2016 HO3, the smallest and closest quasi-moon for Earth.

The basic plan is to use a carrier rocket to send a probe comprising two parts — an orbiter and a reentry module — toward the asteroid.

After approaching 2016 HO3, the unmanned spacecraft will orbit the asteroid for months and then fly very close to it to use a mechanical

arm to scoop dust from the surface.

Tianwen 2 will then fly back to Earth's orbit and release its reentry module, which will return home with the samples. The orbiter will then embark on a new journey toward a main-belt comet called 311P to continue its scientific exploration tasks.

Also known as 469219 Kamo'oalewa, 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.

Meanwhile, 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.



The Tianwen 2 robotic probe is transported to the launch preparation area at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province on Sunday. SHI YICHEN / XINHUA



Visitors admire a bronze zun ritual vessel that dates back to the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century — 11th century BC) while perusing the *This is the Shang* exhibition at the Grand Canal Museum of Beijing on Sunday. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Museums celebrated around the country

Special exhibitions launched to honor nation's rich cultural heritage, history

By WANG RU and DU JUAN

7,046
museums

were registered in China, according to statistics from the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

China celebrated the 49th International Museum Day on Sunday with a showcase of its latest achievements in the cultural sector, underscoring museums' expanding role in meeting the public's spiritual and cultural needs.

According to statistics released by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, China has 7,046 registered museums — an increase of 213 over the past year. That amounts to roughly one museum for every 200,000 people nationwide. Of these, 91.46 percent offer free admission.

In the past year, museums across the country hosted more than 43,000 exhibitions and 511,000 educational activities, drawing a record 1.49 billion visits, according to Rao Quan, director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration. During the Labor Day holiday from May 1 to 5, more than 60 million visits were recorded at museums across China, he said.

"Since 1905, when Nantong Museum — the first public museum in China — was established, the country's museum industry has witnessed 120 years of glorious development, accompanying China's journey toward national rejuvenation, prosperity and cultural flourishing," Rao said. "A museum system with diverse types, broad participation and widespread accessibility has been formed."

ty director of the heritage administration.

"From once being little-visited places to now sometimes being booked up, from being optional pastimes to integral parts of daily life, from cultural guardians to societal builders, museums have been given new missions," Luo said.

In a video message, Emma Nardi, president of the International Council of Museums, noted the rapid growth of the museum sector in China. She welcomed news that the Dictionary of Museology, a key reference work promoted by the council, has been translated into Chinese, calling it a valuable resource for museum professionals in the country.

Following the opening ceremony of the event at the Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, the city launched a monthlong museum season that will run through Oct 8. Each month will focus on a different museum-related theme, such as exhibitions, technology or study tours, as part of a broader effort to integrate museums with tourism, commerce and performance.

The museum launched a major exhibition, *This is the Shang*, on Sunday. One of the most comprehensive exhibitions on the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century — 11th century BC) in recent years, it offers a panoramic look at the production, social organization, daily life and spiritual practices during the period. The show features 338 cultural relics from 28 archaeological institutes and museums nationwide.

"With rapid technological advancement and rising public demand for spiritual and cultural enrichment, the role of museums in society has become increasingly prominent," said Luo Wenli, deputy

director of the heritage administration. "From once being little-visited places to now sometimes being booked up, from being optional pastimes to integral parts of daily life, from cultural guardians to societal builders, museums have been given new missions," Luo said.

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Village sports create economic buzz in Hubei

WUHAN — When Hu Rui's team clinched victory in the tug-of-war finals in Central China's Huangtan town in Hubei province, their prize was not a medal, but something far tastier: 5 kilograms of soft-shelled turtle, 10 kg of crayfish, a bundle of fresh vegetables and a couple tins of local green tea.

"That's what victory smells like," said Hu, a physical education teacher from Yingcheng Huamao Foreign Language School, while holding up the prize on Wednesday.

Over the past two days, the small town of Huangtan transformed its Xingfu Park — or Happiness Park, in English — into a buzzing arena of grassroots sport and local pride. With 40 teams competing and thousands of villagers watching, the town's first-ever sports festival was turned into a grand carnival.

From tug-of-war showdowns to three-legged races and square dances, the event drew people of all ages. Farmer Fu Xin, usually knee-deep in spring crops, took a break from his fields to train for

“We knew that we were more competitive than other villagers, but we still chose to participate in all events, because we want to promote a healthy lifestyle to more people.”

Hu Rui, physical education teacher from Yingcheng Huamao Foreign Language School in Hubei province

the 4.5-kilometer run a month ago.

"I had to represent our village with dignity," he said while catching his breath at the finish line.

The tug-of-war final stole the show. Spectators packed around the enclosure, cheering loudly as teams pulled the rope with all their strength. In the end, Hu's squad of seven young PE teachers edged out a farmers' team led by 61-year-old Chen Qianfeng.

"We knew that we were more competitive than other villagers, but we still chose to participate in all events, because we want to promote a healthy lifestyle to more people," Hu added.

Undeterred, Chen jumped straight into his next event — a

heated table tennis match against another teacher from Yingcheng Huamao. He narrowly lost 13-15 in the deciding game, but beamed with pride.

"He's 30 years younger than me, but we seasawed back and forth for quite a while, which made me feel that I'm still young," Chen said.

For Huangtan, this was not just fun and fitness — it was also smart economics. Nearly 2,000 spectators visited the square on the first morning, and beside the sports field, 35 local vendors set up booths, offering everything from handmade soy sauce to fresh tomatoes.

"It was nonstop," said Li Xiaoping, who helped run the Huangtan soy sauce booth. "We sold

almost 80 kg of fermented bean sauce within the first half hour. People were drawn in by the games, and stayed for the flavor."

The town's mayor, Li Dekui, could not have been happier.

"This kind of event brings people together, and it also boosts our economy," he said, adding that Huangtan prepared to turn such a sports gala into an annual tradition — possibly expanding with dragon boat races and more community festivals.

With the booming of rural sports events, such as the Village Super League and Village Basketball Competition in China in recent years, a growing number of small towns have turned to sports to achieve social governance goals as well as boost tourism and the economy.

The sports festival in Huangtan was also the opening act of Hubei's provincial fitness campaign — an initiative that will bring over 200 sports events to 40 towns and streets across the province this year.

The strategy is clear: use the power of grassroots sports to spark



The Yingcheng Huamao Foreign Language School team competes during the tug-of-war final in Huangtan town, Hubei province, on Wednesday. YUE WENWAN / XINHUA

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broader gains — in public health, tourism and local industry.

"We want to turn the flow of spectators into real economic uplift," said Yan Hanhua, director of the Hubei Provincial Social Sports Management Center.

For towns like Huangtan, it is already working.

"It's great to see that local villagers are exercising more, talking less about mahjong and more about matches," Li said.

XINHUA

Bilateral partnership set for new heights

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

Chinese Ambassador and Danish Foreign Minister meet amid 75th diplomatic anniversary to discuss strengthening ties

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As China and Denmark celebrate the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations this year, the countries are embracing deeper collaboration across a wide range of sectors — from agriculture and clean energy to healthcare and logistics — reinforcing their shared commitment to sustainable development and people-to-people exchanges.

Chinese Ambassador to Denmark Wang Xuefeng recently met with Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen to discuss advancing bilateral ties.

“The current momentum of China-Denmark relations is strong,” said Wang. He noted that the Green Joint Work Programme, launched in 2023 between the governments of China and Denmark, is progressing in an orderly manner, and practical cooperation in various fields continues to yield new results. China is ready to work with Denmark to take the 75th anniversary as an opportunity to elevate the comprehensive strategic partnership to new heights.

Rasmussen echoed the sentiment, saying that “Denmark values its relationship with China and looks forward to deepening friendly exchanges and cooperation. We are committed to advancing bilateral relations and fostering friendship between our peoples.”

Economic ties between China and Denmark remain a cornerstone of their relationship. According to Chinese customs data, the total trade volume between China and Denmark hit \$15.46 billion in 2024, a year-on-year increase of 12.8 percent. China remains Denmark’s largest trading partner in Asia, while Denmark continues to be one of China’s most important economic partners in northern Europe.

Denmark’s exports to China — which include pharmaceuticals, food products, energy technology, and industrial machinery — highlight the complementarity between the two economies.

China, in turn, exports electronics, textiles, and mechanical products to Denmark. This mutually beneficial trade relationship continues to be supported by robust diplomatic engagement and market access initiatives.

Dynamic area

Agriculture has emerged as a particularly dynamic area of cooperation. During a recent visit to Beijing, Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Jacob Jensen met



From left: Pharmaceutical drugs exhibited by LEO Pharma from Denmark at the seventh China International Import Expo held in Shanghai in November 2024. The booth of Danish LINAK at the 89th China International Medical Equipment (Spring) Fair held in Shanghai in April 2024. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



with Chinese Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Han Jun to discuss enhancing agricultural collaboration.

China-Denmark agricultural cooperation mechanisms have improved steadily in recent years, said Han, adding that agricultural trade is growing, and technical exchanges are deepening. “We’ve also made progress in key areas such as dairy,” he added.

Han emphasized China’s commitment to high-level opening-up and called for intensified cooperation on green agriculture, smart farming and the efficient use of swine genetic resources. Jensen underscored that Denmark is ready to strengthen exchanges with China in agricultural science and technology and animal health. Both sides agreed to pursue joint efforts in climate-resilient agriculture, co-sign an action plan, and convene a new round of working group meetings.

Building on this high-level consensus, collaboration is taking shape on the ground. On March 13, in a bid to promote sustainable swine production and accelerate agricultural modernization, a Danish delegation representing the pig and dairy industries visited the headquarters of Chinese agri-tech company Shenzhen Kingkey Smart Agriculture Times in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. There the two sides engaged in in-depth discussions on livestock farming practices, environmental technologies, and sustainable agriculture.

Katja Goodhew, minister counselor for food, agriculture and fisheries at the embassy of Denmark in Beijing, highlighted Denmark’s advanced standards in odor control, waste treatment, and biosecurity — key drivers

behind Denmark’s agricultural innovation.

Kingkey Smart Agri showcased its achievements in vertical pig farming, circular agriculture, and waste-to-fertilizer solutions that create a closed-loop green ecosystem.

Another notable example of Sino-Danish agricultural collaboration is the recent import of 1,100 high-quality Danish breeding pigs to Pinglang town, Duyun city, Guizhou province, on April 26. Imported by Guizhou Yixin Seed Industry Technology, this initiative aims to modernize the region’s pig-breeding system, reduce reliance on foreign seed sources, and enhance local breeding capacity, solidifying Duyun’s position as a hub for pig genetics innovation in Southwest China.

Sustainable path

The China-Denmark partnership has been marked by a strong mutual emphasis on sustainability. The Green Joint Work Programme provides a strategic framework for joint initiatives in areas such as environmental protection, water management, healthcare, food and agriculture, as well as the transition to green energy.

At the China International Import Expo in Shanghai that took place in November, Denmark was a high-profile participant — for the seventh consecutive year — and debuted two national pavilions focusing on food and life sciences.

“China is Denmark’s second-largest market for pharmaceuticals, biological solutions, and medical equipment,” said Danish Ambassador to China Michael Starbæk Christensen. “Both countries face the challenge of aging

populations. This is a great opportunity to showcase Danish healthcare solutions aligned with China’s Healthy China 2030 strategy.”

Ambassador Christensen added that Denmark hopes to consolidate green cooperation by offering its clean energy solutions. He said that China has made impressive strides in solar energy. He recalled his visit to Qinghai province, a region that, along with the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, is taking renewable energy seriously and generating significant amounts of clean power.

He added that a key challenge now lies in efficiently transmitting this energy to eastern regions such as Beijing, which could present opportunities for collaboration.

Danish companies have been at the forefront of China’s green transformation. Scan Global Logistics, one of Denmark’s largest logistics companies, recently reached a milestone in China. In March, SGL was granted the status of regional headquarters by the Shanghai municipal government. In April, the company launched China’s first all-electric trunk route fleet, along with a smart freight operations center.

“With this, our zero-carbon logistics corridor in China has entered a new stage,” said SGL Global CEO Allan Melgaard at the inauguration of the company’s new office on Shanghai’s North Bund. “China will undoubtedly become a core engine for global growth.”

Equipped with 132 kilowatt-hour battery systems, the new electric trucks boast a 200-kilometer range and lower carbon dioxide emissions by up to 95 percent compared to diesel trucks. The newly established opera-

tions center enables full-chain digital monitoring, including real-time tracking and temperature and humidity control.

“China has evolved from a highway freight superpower to an innovation hub for green technologies,” said SGL CEO Asia Rickard Ingvarsson. “We are committed to long-term investment.”

SGL Chief Operating Officer Mads Drejer revealed plans to expand operations to Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, Nanjing in Jiangsu province, and western China. Shanghai will continue to be the heart of the company’s strategy for China, he said.

Another symbol of Danish investment in China is Grundfos, the world’s largest pump manufacturer. With an 80-year history and a 30-year presence in China, Grundfos has played a role in constructing some of the nation’s most iconic infrastructure projects — including the Bird’s Nest stadium and Shanghai Disneyland.

In March 2024, Grundfos opened a high-end manufacturing facility in Changshu, Jiangsu province. The factory, which spans 35,000 square meters and represents a \$100 million investment, is among the most sustainable globally.

Group CEO Poul Due Jensen said that since Grundfos entered China in 1995, the market has grown to become one of its most important globally. He expressed pride in contributing to China’s green development through the company’s energy-efficient solutions.

Recently, the factory received China’s first national energy-saving certification for a variable frequency centrifugal pump system — a benchmark in accelerating the green transition of the industry. Grundfos also helped shape China’s first mandatory efficiency standard for such pump systems.

Grundfos China is now leading sustainability audits among its core suppliers. The company requires its partners to undergo third-party certifications such as EcoVadis to ensure environmental compliance throughout the supply chain. The goal is to build a transparent, responsible, and resilient green value chain, according to the company.

Jiangsu has become a hub for Danish enterprises, with more than 100 Danish companies operating in the province, including 45 in Suzhou. Grundfos’ investment is among the largest single-project Danish investments in China over the past decade. It also stands as the company’s biggest overseas investment to date.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

China and Denmark are joining hands to strengthen exchanges and promote cooperation. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the Sino-Danish Centre for Education and Research — an international education hall is connecting the world’s excellent academic resources and research capabilities through cross-border cooperation on the shore of Yanqi Lake in Beijing’s Huairou Science City.

The center, which was co-founded 15 years ago by the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, aka UCAS, and eight Danish universities, aids in writing a chapter of innovative cooperation between countries in the new era through continuous and in-depth educational collaboration, according to representatives from the center.

High-level cooperation

The Sino-Danish College, or SDC, undertakes the educational functions of the center. Then Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt attending the first semester’s opening ceremony in 2012. The House of the Danish Industry Foundation located on the Yanqi Lake campus of UCAS was built with a donation from the Danish Industry Foundation and symbolizes the Sino-Danish friendship. The former Danish queen Margrethe II broke ground for it in 2014.

A joint management committee was established through cooperation between the Chinese and Danish sides to support the center’s development. These high-level interactions embody the core concepts of Sino-Danish cooperation — joint consultation, co-construction and sharing — laying a deep foundation and providing reliable support for the development of SDC, the representatives said.

The center abounds in academic power, attracting intellectual resources from over 50 institutes of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, or CAS, and eight top-notch universities from Denmark. It involves five strategic fields such as life sciences, water and the environment and social sciences.

In this context, the SDC not only unites academic power but also provides a unique environment for global talent development and intercultural collaboration. According to Morten Laugesen, Executive Director of SDC, “SDC is a truly unique and important collaboration”, especially in an era where global challenges like climate and environmental change require joint solutions. He emphasized that SDC plays an important role by training students with different worldviews to collaborate and understand each other, fostering value-creating international relationships.

Education and research center bolsters Sino-Danish ties



Top-notch learning

Leveraging the research and educational resources of the CAS and the eight Danish universities, SDC provides a dual-supervisor system (one Chinese and one Danish), English-taught courses by Chinese and foreign teachers, and mixed classes of outstanding Chinese and international students. Professor Morten Meldal from the University of Copenhagen, who was awarded the 2022 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, has supervised five Chinese students as a Danish mentor at SDC.

SDC implements a double degree education model where students can obtain degrees from both UCAS and one of the eight Danish universities. It aims to cultivate innovative and entrepreneurial professionals

with interdisciplinary thinking, innovative awareness, an understanding of international rules, and international competitiveness. SDC offers seven master’s programs and five doctoral research fields.

Students from China and Denmark have grown together in the cross-cultural environment of SDC, a vivid example of the cooperation between the two countries. For international students, the school is more like a comprehensive platform where they can be educated, learn Chinese culture, and promote friendly cooperation between China and other countries.

Tobias Harritz, who received a master’s degree at SDC in 2024, said that with limited options to study neuroscience in Denmark,

he applied to the Neuroscience and Neuroimaging master’s program at SDC. “Our Chinese classmates were incredibly welcoming, often taking us to explore sights in and around Beijing, such as the Forbidden City and the Great Wall,” Harritz said.

He said that the knowledge he gained from the master’s program cannot be understated. It enabled him to secure his PhD position at the University of Oxford. Harritz’s research in SDC mainly focuses on mild traumatic brain injury, aka mTBI.

Xue Rong, the Chinese supervisor of Harritz and a professor at the Institute of Biophysics of CAS, said: “During the one-year research process, Tobias completed the experimental design and data collection, observed differences in brain imaging between mTBI and normal mice across various modalities, and constructed models to reasonably explain the longitudinal changes of the corresponding imaging indicators. His work was very comprehensive and excellent.”

“In the future, we will incorporate differ-

ent treatment methods into this project to observe their effects on mTBI recovery, thereby providing references for the treatment of mTBI. We will also attempt to conduct related research in human mTBI patients,” said Xue. Harritz also continues studying traumatic brain injury using advanced MRI methods in humans at the University of Oxford.

For Chinese students, SDC is an international platform for them to learn from advanced educational systems, pay scholar visits abroad and participate in interdisciplinary seminars.

When talking about harvests reaped in SDC, Cao Mingjing, who graduated in 2020 with double doctoral degrees, said: “SDC offers us precious exchange opportunities abroad. From the middle of 2018 to early 2019, I studied at the iNANO research center of Aarhus University, and it was very lucky that I was in the internationalized group of professor Duncan Sutherland and my colleagues were from different European countries.”

Cao said she experienced the cultures of different countries, learned European thinking patterns and research habits and broadened her horizons there.

Green development

Aside from training students from the two countries, SDC also practices cooperation in green development. In 2023, the Danish and Chinese governments launched the Green Joint Work Programme to strengthen their collaboration in areas including climate and energy, the environment and water resources, and science and technology.

Danish Minister for Higher Education and Science Christina Egelund emphasized during her visit to SDC: “In areas such as green research, climate change, environmental protection and global health, China is not only an important partner of Denmark, but also of the world.”

Building on this shared vision, the leadership at SDC also sees sustainability as an integral part of its academic mission. According to Laugesen, the two countries’ green vision is incorporated into SDC’s educational programs, shapes its research collaboration, and is reflected in its many PhD projects. SDC is currently strongly focused on the green transition and on creating solutions to global problems such as health, food, the environment and climate, he said.

Taking the national green transition strategy as an opportunity, SDC will deepen collaborative innovation in areas such as climate change, clean energy and smart agriculture. This bridge of science and education spanning the Eurasian continent not only carries the beautiful expectations of the two countries’ people, but also demonstrates the Chinese wisdom in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

WORLD

Israeli forces launch fresh Gaza offensive

Window for peace remains narrow, say experts, as concern aired over rising toll

By LIU JIANQIAO
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The window for lasting peace in the Gaza Strip remains perilously narrow, experts warn, as Israel launched a large-scale military operation on Saturday, despite mediators' efforts for ceasefire talks.

Israeli airstrikes killed at least 100 Palestinians across Gaza overnight, health authorities said on Sunday.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has expanded its strikes on the enclave, killing hundreds of people since Thursday. It has said the expansion is aimed at "achieving all the war's objectives", including release of hostages and "the defeat of Hamas".

The intensified assault comes as international concern has mounted over worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza because of an Israeli aid blockade since March 2.

On Saturday, mediators Egypt and Qatar began a new round of indirect ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas, but sources close to the negotiations told Reuters there had been no breakthrough.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, addressing the 34th Arab League Summit in Iraq on Saturday, said he was "alarmed" at the escalation and called for a permanent ceasefire.

The summit's statement urged the international community "to exert pressure to end the bloodshed" and let in aid.

As the conflict shows no signs of abating and the humanitarian crisis grows ever more dire, experts said the prospect for lasting peace remains clouded by uncertainty.

Ding Jun, director of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, said Israel's decision to pursue a large-scale military campaign in Gaza alongside hostage negotiations reflects a calculated effort to navigate a complex domestic political landscape.

"On one hand, Israeli leaders face intense public pressure and mounting criticism over failed rescue attempts. To secure the release of hostages by any means necessary, and to date, negotiations have proved the only viable path," he said.

"On the other, sustaining military operations bolsters the government's 'wartime' legitimacy, reinforcing the narrative of national resolve."

The relentless operations of the Israeli military have left widespread infrastructure damage and deepened the humanitarian calamity in Gaza, he said.

"Ultimately, as the dominant actor in both conflict and diplomacy, whether a hostage-release deal or ceasefire deal can be achieved mainly depend on the political calculations of the Israeli authorities."

Humanitarian crisis
Zhu Yongbiao, director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University in Gansu province, said Israel has long pursued a hard-line policy on the conflict, overlooking the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"Israel is a predominant force backed by the United States. If it refuses to take concrete measures to address conditions in Gaza, it risks further deepening the territory's humanitarian crisis," he said.

The Israeli blockade and continuing military campaigns have severely restricted — and in some areas completely halted — the delivery of food, water, fuel and medical supplies to Gaza. As the humanitarian crisis intensifies, the international community must urgently come together to expand relief efforts and alleviate civilian suffering, said Ding, from Shanghai International Studies University.

Both experts emphasized the two-state solution and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, urging countries to work within the UN framework and work with regional partners to pursue a peaceful and sustainable resolution.

"The military conflicts and humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip are untenable, and there is broad international consensus that an immediate ceasefire is essential to end the fighting and alleviate civilian suffering," Ding said.

"An obsession with force cannot deliver peace, and military occupation cannot secure lasting stability; only sustained political dialogue offers a viable path to resolving conflicts in Gaza."

Agencies contributed to this story.

NEW YORK — A Mexican navy sailing ship on a global goodwill tour struck the Brooklyn Bridge in New York on Saturday, snapping its three masts, killing two crew members and leaving some sailors dangling from harnesses high in the air waiting for help.

New York Mayor Eric Adams said the 142-year-old bridge was spared major damage but at least 19 people aboard the ship needed medical treatment.

Two of the four people who suffered serious injuries later died, Adams said on social media on Sunday.

The cause of the collision was under investigation.

In a scene captured in multiple eyewitness videos, the ship, called the *Cuauhtemoc*, could be seen traveling swiftly in reverse toward the bridge near the Brooklyn side of the East River. Then, its three masts struck the bridge's span and snapped, one by one, as the ship kept moving.

Videos showed heavy traffic on the span at the time of the 8:20 pm collision. No one on the bridge was reported injured.

The vessel, which was flying a giant Mexican flag and had 277 people aboard, then drifted into a pier on the riverbank as onlookers scrambled away.

Sailors could be seen aloft in the rigging on the damaged masts but, remarkably, no one fell into the water, officials said.

Sydney Neidell and Lily Katz told The Associated Press they were sitting outside to watch the sunset when they saw the vessel strike the bridge.

"We saw someone dangling, and I couldn't tell if it was just blurry or my eyes, and we were able to zoom in on our phone and there was someone dangling from the harness from the top for at least 15 minutes before they were able to rescue them," Katz said.

Just before the collision, Nick Corso, 23, took his phone out to capture the backdrop of the ship and the bridge against the sunset. Instead, he heard what sounded like the loud snapping of a "big twig". Several more snaps followed.

People in his vicinity began running and "pandemonium" erupted aboard the ship, he said. He later saw a handful of people dangling from a mast.

"I didn't know what to think. I was like, is this a movie?" he said.

The Mexican navy said in a post on X that the *Cuauhtemoc* was an academy training vessel. It said a total of 22 people were injured, 19 of whom needed medical treatment.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum wrote on X that she was "deeply saddened" by the two crew members' deaths.

The Brooklyn Bridge, which opened in 1883, has a nearly 490-meter main span supported by two masonry towers. More than 100,000 vehicles and an estimated 32,000 pedestrians cross every day, according to the city's transportation department.

Traffic was halted after the collision but was allowed to resume after an inspection, city officials said.

It was unclear what caused the ship to veer off course. Wilson Arambales, New York police chief of special operations, said the ship had just left a Manhattan pier and was supposed to have been headed out to sea, not toward the bridge.

He said an initial report was that the pilot of the ship had lost power because of a mechanical problem, though officials cautioned that information was preliminary. Videos show a tugboat was close to the *Cuauhtemoc* at the time of the crash.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Onlookers gather along the East River where a Mexican navy ship crashed into the Brooklyn Bridge in New York on Saturday. ZHANG ZHENGHAO / XINHUA

Mexican ship strikes Brooklyn Bridge

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AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

POLAND Voting underway for new president

Poles were voting on Sunday in a presidential election at a time of heightened security concerns stemming from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and growing worry that the United States' commitment to Europe's security could be weakening under President Donald Trump. The top two front-runners are Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, a liberal allied with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, and Karol Nawrocki, a conservative historian with no prior political experience who is supported by the nationalist Law and Justice party. Recent opinion polls show Trzaskowski with about 30 percent support and Nawrocki in the mid-20s. A second round between the two is widely expected to take place on June 1.

JAPAN Support for Ishiba falls to record low

Support for Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has hit a record low, with nearly nine out of every 10 voters dissatisfied with the government's response to soaring price of rice, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday. Support for Ishiba's government was at 27.4 percent, down from 32.6 percent a month ago, a Kyodo poll showed, boding ill for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party and junior coalition partner Komeito in an upper house election slated for July. The poll showed 87.1 percent of respondents found government measures addressing rising rice prices insufficient. Retail rice prices are about double what they were a year ago after extreme heat hit crops and a tourism boom added to demand, though the government in March started releasing stockpiled rice into the market.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

China vows to back global health efforts

By ZHENG WANYIN in Geneva
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The Chinese delegation to the 78th World Health Assembly, set to convene on Monday in Geneva, has vowed to promote international health cooperation and actively contribute to discussions on a wide range of priorities, including an agreement on pandemics.

The delegation, led by Lei Haichao, minister of China's National Health Commission, made the remarks on Saturday at a news conference, where they introduced their involvement in the gathering.

This year's assembly, themed "One World for Health", runs through May 27. It will address about 75 items and sub-items, covering topics, including health emergency preparedness and response, financing and budgeting, World Health Organization governance reform, and other pressing global health issues.

A key highlight will be the consideration of adopting the pandemic agreement — a document on how to better tackle future pandemics in a more well-organized and equitable manner — which WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus describes as "truly historic".

The final draft of the treaty was released last month following three years of talks among WHO member states. Notable elements include the rapid sharing of data about new diseases, the allocation of medical

resources to the WHO in the event of a future outbreak, and the transfer of health technologies to poorer nations, the BBC reported.

Speaking at the news conference, Xia Gang, deputy director of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, said China welcomes consensus among all parties on the draft agreement.

Xia said he believes the pact will help promote the equitable distribution of technology, funding and resources and support developing countries in strengthening their capacity to detect and respond to pandemics.

China has always been a staunch supporter and practitioner of multilateralism, as well as an active participant in global public health governance, he said, and China's constructive participation in the negotiations of the pandemic treaty is a prime example of this commitment.

Regarding Taiwan province's participation in this year's assembly, Chen Xu, permanent representative of China to the United Nations office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, said the region's participation in events of international organizations, including the WHO, must follow the one-China principle, which is also a fundamental principle confirmed by UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly Resolution 25.1.

"There is no so-called gap in the international anti-pandemic system, as hyped up by Democratic Progressive Party authorities of Taiwan province as well as a few countries," Chen said, pointing out that the Chinese central government has made proper arrangements for Taiwan province's participation in global health affairs under the one-China principle.

The central government has approved the participation in WHO technical activities by 11 batches of 12 health experts from Taiwan province over the past year, and there is an International Health Regulations Contact Point in Taiwan province for it to promptly access and report to the WHO on information related to health emergencies, Chen said.

"This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80th anniversary of the recovery of Taiwan province," he said.

"Yet, at this critical juncture, the DPP as well as a few countries have attempted to reverse the course of history blatantly, again. They are essentially trying to challenge the postwar international order."

In addition to engaging in the main event, the Chinese delegation will host three side events during the assembly, focusing on the digital and intelligent empowerment of primary healthcare, traditional medicine, and mental health.



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多彩的世界
源自多样的自然

A vibrant world
stems from diverse nature

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM



WORLD

EU advised to consider strategic autonomy

By ZHENG WANYIN in London
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Amid the "America First" policy pursued by the current United States administration and escalating great power rivalries, European experts echoed that the geopolitical turbulence puts Europe in a tougher position, one in which the continent must seriously consider its strategic autonomy.

They made the remarks recently at the Caixin London Atlantic Dialogue, hosted by the Chinese media group Caixin.

In the "Expecting Unexpected: How We Navigate an Unfamiliar World" panel, Mark Leonard, co-founder and director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, a pan-European think tank, said the US policy shift represents a "secular trend" and, fundamentally, an ideological reversal, as the US appears no longer aligned with Europe in upholding the consensus around the so-called rules-based international order that has governed the West for the past 80 years.

"What is particularly difficult for Europeans to get their heads around is that the US is moving from being the upholder of this rules-based order and becoming a normal country, which puts itself first and sees a lot of the things that were previously regarded as assets now as weaknesses," he said.

Pointing to a series of events, such as the announcement of "reciprocal tariffs" and the US-Russia rapprochement, Leonard said these moves have turned the US into a "systemic rival" from the perspective of Europeans.

Philipp Roesler, former vice-chancellor of Germany, said the geographical focus of the US shifting from Europe to the "Indo-Pacific" region is not totally new, but has been accelerated by the current administration.

Roesler added that while he agrees the sentiment in transatlantic relations is "truly different", he still believes the US and Europe share similar values.

Roesler mentioned the reform of the debt brake in Germany as "the beginning of the changes happening" — in a way, for the first time, waking up to the geopolitical whirlwind. The debt brake is a constitutional requirement introduced in 2009 that limits the German federal government's annual borrowing to 0.35 percent of its GDP.

But "what is not gonna happen is that everything gets done by the EU at 27", Leonard said. "They are making a difference between unanimity and unity within the EU."

Regain competitiveness

In the "Europe: Economic Renewal amid the Quest for Strategic Autonomy" panel, the discussion centered on Europe's economic reform agenda, with experts agreeing that the region must seek to regain its competitiveness amid the great power game — or risk being squeezed by an increasingly competitive, even hostile, environment.

Emre Peker, director for Europe at the risk research and consultancy Eurasia Group, said the challenges facing the EU are long-standing — namely, a sluggish economy, fiscal challenges, an aging population, declining innovation competitiveness, and other issues — and that the US now merely "adds more fuel to the fire" that has been burning in the EU for a long time.

In the case of the UK, Mark Logan, a former member of the British Parliament and former vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on China, characterized the British political leadership as like those "who only change whenever there is a crisis in front of them" and that the US has, in a twisted way, pushed the UK to reflect on how to really improve as a nation.

Looking ahead, experts emphasized the importance of a long-term industrial strategy to compete in the race.

As the EU and the UK share the twofold challenges, Anton Spisak, associate fellow at the Centre for European Reform, suggested that the two neighbors cooperate in a more structured and coordinated manner.



A girl is reunited with her dog after it was trapped in her grandparents' house after the tornado struck the neighborhood of Sunshine Hills on Saturday in London, Kentucky. MICHAEL SWENSEN / GETTY IMAGES

27 killed as storm sweeps across US

LONDON, Kentucky — At least 27 people have been killed by storm systems that swept across parts of the US Midwest and South, with Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear announcing Saturday that 18 of the deaths came in his state and 10 others were hospitalized in critical condition.

A devastating tornado in Kentucky damaged homes, tossed vehicles and left many people homeless. Seventeen of the deaths were in Laurel County, located in the state's southeast, and one was in Pulaski County. Fire Department Major Roger Leslie Leatherman, a 39-year veteran, died from injuries while responding to the deadly weather.

Parts of two dozen state roads were closed, and some could take days to reopen, Beshear said. He also said the death toll could still rise.

"We need the whole world right now to be really good neighbors to this region," the governor said.

State Emergency Management Director Eric Gibson said hundreds of homes were damaged,

Kayla Patterson, her husband and their five children huddled in a tub in their basement in London, the county seat, as the tornado raged around them.

"You could literally hear just things ripping in the distance, glass shattering everywhere, just roaring like a freight train," she recalled on Saturday. "It was terrible."

The family eventually emerged to the sounds of sirens and panicked neighbors. While the family's own home was spared, others right behind it were demolished, Patterson said as the sound of power tools buzzed in the background. The neighborhood was dotted with piles of lumber, metal sheeting, insulation and stray belongings — a suitcase, a sofa, some six-packs of paper towels.

Rescue underway

Rescuers were searching for survivors all night and into the morning, the sheriff's office said. An emergency shelter was set up at a local high school and donations of food and other necessities were arriving.

The storm was the latest severe weather to cause deaths and widespread damage in Kentucky.

Two months ago, at least 24 people died in a round of storms that swelled creeks and submerged roads. Hundreds of people were rescued, and most of the deaths were caused by vehicles getting stuck in high water.

A storm in late 2021 spawned tornadoes that killed 81 people and leveled portions of towns in western Kentucky. The following summer, floodwaters inundated parts of eastern Kentucky, leaving dozens more dead.

About 1,200 tornadoes strike the US annually, and they have been reported in all 50 states over the years. Researchers found in 2018 that deadly tornadoes were happening less frequently in the traditional "Tornado Alley" of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas and more frequently in parts of the more densely populated and tree-filled mid-South area.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Smurf 'fever'

The Landerneau town in northwestern France attempts to break the record for the largest gathering of Smurf-costumed people on Saturday. More than 3,000 people came together to break the world record for the "Most People Dressed as Smurfs", the fictional, blue gnomelike characters. It wasn't just a record-breaking event but a celebration of community and shared childhood nostalgia.

GUILAUME SALIGOT / MAXPPP

Kremlin: Putin, Zelensky to meet after deal

MOSCOW/KYIV — The Kremlin said on Saturday a meeting between Russia's Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky would be possible only after both sides reach an agreement, a day after the first direct talks between the two countries in more than three years.

US President Donald Trump said later in the day that he would speak to the presidents of Russia and Ukraine on Monday following talks between the two sides.

Trump, writing on Truth Social, said he would speak with Putin to discuss stopping the conflict at 10 am Eastern time on Monday.

Afterward, he said he would speak with Zelensky and various members of NATO.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian news agencies preparations were underway for a conversation between Putin and Trump.

On Friday, the first direct talks since the conflict began in February 2022, between Ukraine and Russia in Istanbul resulted in a concrete agreement to exchange 1,000 prisoners each.

Ukraine's top negotiator, Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, said the "next step" would be a meeting between Zelensky and Putin.

Russia said it took note of the request. "We consider it possible, but only as a result of the work and upon achieving certain results in

the form of an agreement between the two sides," the Kremlin said.

Russia's top negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky said that Moscow and Kyiv would "present their vision of a possible future ceasefire," without saying when.

The Kremlin said that first the swap of prisoners of war had to be completed and both sides needed to present their visions for a ceasefire before fixing the next round of talks.

"For now, we need to do what the delegations agreed on yesterday" in Turkiye, Peskov said, which meant "first and foremost to complete a 1,000 for 1,000 swap".

The head of Ukraine's military intelligence, Kirillo Budanov, told broadcaster TSN he hoped the exchange would happen this week.

Both Moscow and Washington have already talked about the need for a meeting on the conflict between Putin and Trump.

Trump has argued that "nothing's going to happen" on the conflict until he meets Putin face-to-face.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke by telephone with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and said he welcomed the "positive role" of the United States in helping to secure a resumption of talks between Russia and Ukraine. A Russian foreign ministry statement quoted Lavrov as saying contacts would continue.

In an interview with CBS, Rubio

said Lavrov had told him Moscow was preparing a document outlining its requirements for a ceasefire.

If Russia and Moscow can both provide "serious and viable" proposals "then there's been real progress, and we can work off of that," Rubio said.

On the front battle lines, the Russian army said its troops captured Oleksandropil village in the Donetsk region, the site of some of the most intense fighting in the conflict.

Ukraine's air force said on Sunday that Russia fired a total of 273 exploding drones and decoys. Of those, 88 were intercepted and a further 128 lost, likely having been electronically jammed. The attacks targeted Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions.

Yuriy Ilnat, head of the Communications Department of the Ukrainian Air Force, told The Associated Press that the barrage was the biggest drone attack since the start of the conflict.

Russia's previous largest known single drone attack was on the eve of the conflict's third anniversary, when Russia bombed Ukraine with 267 drones, AP reported.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defenses shot down seven Ukrainian drones overnight, and a further 18 on Sunday morning.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Washington's levies harmful, studies warn

Tariffs to result in revenue shortfalls due to retaliation from trade partners

By YIFAN XU in Washington
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Two independent studies concluded that the universal tariffs proposed by President Donald Trump would fail to deliver promised revenue while damaging the US economy, businesses, and global trade.

"Universal tariffs are a highly inefficient and distortionary way to raise revenue," said Warwick McKibbin, a nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, or PIIIE, during a recent joint event with the Tax Foundation. "They will do harm to growth, investment, and employment in the US economy."

The analyses of the two studies presented at the event, conducted separately but with aligned assumptions, project higher consumer prices, reduced economic growth, and significant revenue shortfalls due to behavioral shifts and retaliation from trading partners.

The PIIIE study, led by McKibbin, utilized the G-Cubed model, a global economic simulation tool, to evaluate tariffs of 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent on all US imports. It found that a 15 percent tariff would generate more than \$3 trillion over ten years without retaliation, but this drops to \$1.5 trillion when countries like China reciprocate with equivalent tariffs. A 20 percent tariff yields just \$791 billion, reflecting a Laffer Curve effect where higher rates reduce trade volume and revenue.

"If you have a very high tariff and eliminate trade, you have no revenue," McKibbin said.

The Tax Foundation's study, presented by Erica York, vice-president of federal tax policy, used a neoclassical macroeconomic model. It estimates a 10 percent tariff would raise \$2.2 trillion conventionally over ten years, falling to \$1.7 trillion with dynamic effects and retaliation. Higher tariffs exacerbate the damage, shrinking the economy by lowering real after-tax wages and investment returns. "Tariffs will shrink the long-run size of the US economy by reducing both the real after-tax wage rate and after-tax return on investment," York said. "Revenue from tariffs is significantly less than a simple analysis would suggest."

Both studies underscore the Laffer Curve's relevance: beyond a certain point, higher tariffs reduce revenue by stifling trade. Maurice Obstfeld, a PIIIE senior fellow, modeled this with a quadratic function, finding revenue peaks at 22 percent to 24 percent tariff rates, yielding \$3.65 trillion over ten years, then declines. "At very high tariff rates, you'll lose a lot of revenue because you hurt the economy a lot. It makes you lose revenue overall," he said.

Experts mentioned that retaliation amplifies the damage. China, as one of the major US trading partners, has historically responded

to tariffs with countermeasures, as seen in 2018 and 2019. The PIIIE study shows that reciprocal tariffs from 75 percent of the global economy could erase initial trade balance gains, hitting sectors like agriculture and manufacturing hardest due to their reliance on exports and imported inputs.

Alan Cole, a Tax Foundation senior economist, highlighted the challenges for small and medium-sized enterprises. "The on-again, off-again nature of policy makes it extremely difficult for businesses to plan. A lot of industrial investment is built with a 50-year timeline, but current tariff policies are highly uncertain," Cole said.

Consumers to feel pinch

The Tax Foundation's study notes that tariffs on capital goods and inputs raise production costs, undermining Trump's reindustrialization goals. Retaliation targeting US exports, particularly from China, could further erode competitiveness. So, consumers will feel the pinch through higher prices and reduced purchasing power.

Trump's latest tariff plans, announced in April 2025, include a 10 percent universal tariff on all imports, with exemptions for some allies, and a total 54 percent rate on Chinese goods. Before the recent agreement, some Chinese exports to the US faced tariffs exceeding 100 percent after several rounds of Chinese countermeasures and further US tariff increases.

Following high-stakes talks in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 11-12, the US and China agreed to a 90-day tariff truce, reducing US tariffs on Chinese goods from 145 percent to 30 percent and Chinese tariffs on US goods from 125 percent to 10 percent, effective Wednesday, to continue negotiations and de-escalate trade tensions. This truce could temporarily mitigate some of the economic damages projected by the studies, though its long-term impact depends on further negotiations.

The studies also warn of broader implications. PIIIE President Adam Posen criticized the fiscal context at the event. "Structurally eroding the competitiveness of the US economy and further decreasing the tax base is further irresponsibility, which we can ill afford," he said. Posen mentioned that with a US budget deficit exceeding 6 percent of GDP, reliance on tariffs could deepen economic woes.

The studies also mention that uncertainty compounds the problem, saying that frequent policy shifts disrupt supply chains and investment, particularly for small businesses lacking lobbying power. Obstfeld said that differential tariffs across countries create inefficiencies, driving trade diversion and raising costs.

Meanwhile, experts from the PIIIE and the Tax Foundation agreed that universal tariffs are an inefficient, destructive fiscal strategy.

Sky crawlers



Kites are launched at the start of the 10th Anniversary of Bridlington Kite Festival in Bridlington, England, on Saturday. Some of the world's largest inflatable kites will take to the skies above the dramatic cliffs of the East Yorkshire coast to mark the anniversary. IAN FORSYTH / GETTY IMAGES

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Domestic market a golden opportunity

Adjusting to local preferences to capitalize on products facing tariffs from US trade conflict is key

By ZHU WENQIAN
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China has rolled out a set of measures to help foreign trade companies expand into the giant domestic market to hedge against uncertainties of foreign business.

For China's exporters, switching to sell in the domestic market comes along with challenges, including adapting to different standard and price systems and domestic consumer preferences.

However, China wields great power in tackling trade pressure as it has a huge domestic market with 1.4 billion potential consumers.

To help smooth the transition, the Ministry of Commerce, together with local governments and multiple enterprises, has been taking intensive actions to help foreign trade firms alleviate operational pressures since April.

"The Ministry of Commerce will focus on helping 10 major provinces in foreign trade and consumption, and carry out a series of special matchmaking activities around key industries," said Sheng Qiuping, vice-minister of commerce, during a recent conference.

So far, the activities have been launched in provinces such as Jiangsu, Hainan, Hubei, Hunan and Shandong. The events have mainly focused on helping industries with foreign trade advantages like light industry, household appliance, furniture and home furnishings, and food, according to the commerce ministry.

"As the world's second-largest consumption market, China has the largest middle-income group in the world, with stable growth in investment and consumption and enormous potential," said Xu Man, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Multiple domestic online and offline retailers such as JD, Alibaba's online trading platform 1688, as well as Yonghui Superstores, said they would like to provide more domestic sales channels for foreign trade firms facing export obstacles.

For instance, 1688 said for foreign trade companies with inventory backlogs, the platform will provide sales assistance services and reduce commissions, and those companies can also negotiate a cooperation model with the platform.

Hangzhou Kara Pet Products Co Ltd, a foreign trade firm that mainly makes cat stands, dog beds, plastic feeders for pets and dog chains, said it has exported products to multiple countries and regions such as the US, Europe, Australia and Japan, and its annual output value has exceeded 200 million yuan (\$27.8 million). The company's recent business has been affected by tariff uncertainties.

"For products we have finished manufacturing, US customers didn't cancel the orders and they asked us to suspend the shipments. Facing such a situation, we believe that we still need to consider building overseas factories," said Chu Qinqin, founder of Hangzhou Kara Pet Products.

Chu said orders from the US accounted for one third of its total orders, and the company plans to further expand its business in other countries. In the past few years, it expanded the overseas markets in



Above: Customers are attracted by a promotional activity for discounted foreign trade goods in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, on April 26.

Left: A customer selects seafood products originally produced for export at a supermarket in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on April 23.

Bottom: People choose baking molds at the foreign trade commodity zone at a supermarket in Shijingshan district in Beijing on April 22.

Japan, Russia and Brazil, and businesses from those markets began to pick up last year with growing demand from consumers.

"The suspension of the US orders has little impact on the operation of the entire company, and we remain an optimistic attitude. We also sell in China, with a change of styles of the products, despite the number of orders being much smaller than the exports," Chu said.

She added that if foreign trade firms would like to further shift the businesses domestically, they need to get used to process smaller orders, as people tend not to stock up goods in China, given intense competition.

Peng Jianzhen, president of the China Chain Store and Franchise Association, said with the ongoing consumption upgrade trend, China has a large number of opportunities for exporters to expand local sales if there are supplies of high-quality, new type products that meet the demand of domestic consumers.

"For China's foreign trade firms, they have many products that sell well in developed countries. If they make some adjustments to cope with the demand of domestic consumers and domestic standards, there is room for further growth," Peng said.

Guangzhou Boqun Textile Technology Co Ltd, a textile maker of knitted and woven products, said

due to uncertainties of the foreign trade business, it plans to expand sales channels in China to offset the impact.

Last year, the Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based company's foreign trade business accounted for 60 percent share of the total. Despite its foreign trade business volume not being significant in the US, tariff uncertainties have had a negative impact on the firm.

"This year, we plan to shift our focus to the domestic market due to tariff policies and intensified competition in foreign trade. Domestic customers have indicated a growing demand for some foreign trade products," said Li Zheyu, general manager of Guangzhou Boqun Textile Technology.

Enterprises that have already established their (brand-building) strategies have indicated stronger overall risk resistance abilities and are relatively less affected by external factors such as trade frictions, said Ashley Wu, senior director of business development of the Trade Desk in China. The Trade Desk is a California-based global advertising technology company.

More exporters are pivoting to the domestic market, and the trend fits with China's growing efforts to boost domestic demand. In the Government Work Report released in March, expanding consumption was listed as a top priority among this year's tasks, and various promotional activities are expected to be carried out nationwide throughout the year.

The commerce ministry, together with five other departments, launched the "Shopping in China" campaign on April 13, and this year stands as the inaugural year of the campaign.

As one of the latest activities of the campaign, the ministry and related entities organized an online shopping festival from April 28 to May 12, and the opening ceremony was held in East China's Wuxi, Jiangsu province. For the festival, more than 200 diverse activities were held in different regions, including an online shopping event targeting the sales of African products in Hunan province.

For the "Shopping in China" campaign, the commerce ministry encourages local governments to hold debut performances, exhibitions, and distinctive events in different forms and formats. Key pedestrian streets, commercial complexes, shopping malls, supermarkets and outlets are encouraged to launch promotions and high-quality new products, according to the guideline.

Different provinces and cities are encouraged to hold activities such as food markets and culinary exchanges, as well as publish recommendation lists and maps of delicious food, launch high-quality tourist routes, and organize domestic and international cultural performances, high-level sports events and museum exhibitions, the guideline said.

Boosted by multiple favorable policies, China's consumption market has indicated a trend of steady growth. In the first quarter, total retail sales of consumer goods in the country reached 12.47 trillion yuan, up 4.6 percent year-on-year. Catering revenue came in at 1.4 trillion yuan, growing 4.7 percent on a yearly basis, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

New tax refund policy hits right notes

REPORTER'S LOG
By Zhu Wenqian

Over the past few weeks, when I went shopping at Beijing's SKP department store and the Qianmen area along the city's Central Axis, I found a growing number of foreign visitors receiving their tax refunds on the spot, after shopping in these places.

This phenomenon has certainly become more common after China rolled out in late April its new tax refund policy that allows inbound tourists to get tax refunds immediately after purchases.

Since the policy was piloted in cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen in Guangdong province, as well as a few other places earlier, it has been well received by a large number of overseas travelers, significantly boosting consumption growth.

Previously, China's tax refund procedures for foreign visitors were processed at departure airports, which was cumbersome and result-

ed in some tourists giving up their tax refunds.

The new policy allows eligible international visitors to receive their tax refunds instantly, rather than having to wait in line at airports until they leave the country.

The service allows travelers to experience the benefits of tax refunds and facilitates their use of the program for additional shopping on site, stimulating immediate consumption willingness.

Several European nations — including France and Italy — have implemented instant tax refund services on site or fast tax refunds at

airports. Countries in Asia, such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore, have also optimized their tax refund processes through digital means.

When I shopped in Japan previously, I received my tax refund immediately upon purchase. It was a good shopping experience as I could instantly benefit from the policy, which further incentivized me to spend.

Now, China has enhanced the tourism shopping experience by applying the mechanism nationwide, benchmarking with mature tax refund systems overseas.

"The policy stands as an impor-

tant measure taken by China to benchmark international high-standard economic and trade rules. It has become an accelerator to help stimulate inbound consumption in China," said Andrea Yue, partner of indirect tax services at professional services firm EY.

"Improving the openness of the consumption sector in China can help enhance economic resilience and showcase the attractiveness of the Chinese market," Yue said.

Last year, the number of overseas tourists who applied for tax refunds in China — and the sales revenue of related products sold — as well as the value of refunds, increased by 230 percent, 120 percent and 130 percent year-on-year, respectively, said the State Taxation Administration.

"The penetration rate of China's electronic payment systems is globally leading, providing a technological foundation for instant tax refund services. The national implementation of the policy, coupled with the 240-hour visa-free transit arrangement, is forecast to boost inbound tourism and spending on shopping," Yue said.

She added that China is expected to become the world's largest inbound tourism market this year. In such a context, comprehensively promoting the instant tax refund service can better meet the consumption demand of overseas tourists, unleash their consumption potential, and promote the growth of China's tourism economy.

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Customs officers check "refund-upon-purchase" goods at Wenjindu port in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, on April 30. MAO SIQIAN / XINHUA

Concerts, music festivals boost tourism, spending

BEIJING — Driven by rising consumer spending on entertainment and tourism, China's live music performance industry, particularly concerts and music festivals, has expanded rapidly, emerging as a key growth driver for services consumption and economic growth.

Under a sky streaked with a molten gold sunset, the air hummed with the salt-kissed breeze off the Bohai Sea. Zhao Sisi adjusted her pulsing light-up headband as she laughed with her friends who had traveled two hours from Beijing to join her at the Bubbling & Boiling Music and Art Festival, which was held at Dongjiang Port, Tianjin, earlier this month.

"It's quality time for me to meet my best friends — people I rarely see while busy with work — and enjoy our favorite singers together," said Zhao, a Tianjin resident.

After booking a three-day pass and a nearby hotel, 28-year-old Gu Chengbo relaxed with his girlfriend on a sofa at a makeshift massage stall, surrounded by pop-up merchandise stands and street food vendors. "I came here for the May Day holiday, and nothing has disappointed me — not the music, food, accommodation, nor the entertainment facilities," he told Xinhua.

The main audience of the festival was aged between 18 and 30, among which females accounted for as much as 70 percent of the audience, while those from out-of-town also came to about 70 percent, said Zhang Chongshuo, CEO of Sparkle Live Entertainment Co Ltd, host of the festival.

Zhang noted that attendees were drawn to the event to fulfill their spiritual and cultural needs, reflecting their active engagement in cultural and tourism consumption. He emphasized that this trend has fostered a new cultural consumption model centered around music festivals.

According to industry experts, the May Day holiday is usually a peak period for hosting music festivals and a 1 yuan (\$0.14) music festival ticket can drive about 7 to 8 yuan of consumption in the host city, including hotels, catering and shopping.

Besides music festivals, concerts are also good excuses for audiences to explore a city and splash the

cash on travel, food and accommodation. Among the major tourist cities, Haikou saw significantly higher hotel reservations during the May Day holiday, growing 3.4 times compared to last year. A popular boy group called Teens in Times held concerts over the May Day holiday weekend in the coastal city known for its tropical beaches.

According to data from the China Association of Performing Arts, the number of concerts with over 10,000 people rose by 84.37 percent from a year earlier in 2024, making it the category with the most outstanding box office performance in China's performance market.

So far, China's live music performance industry, led by concerts and music festivals, boasts a market size of around 30 billion yuan and drives the development of more than 120 related industries such as food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment, said Han Yuanjun, a researcher at the China Tourism Academy.

Han noted that this plays a key role in shaping a city or a destination by comprehensively driving its soft power and economic growth.

In the latest plan on special initiatives to increase consumption released in March, the Chinese government has vowed to expand consumption in culture, sports and tourism. It will optimize the approval process for commercial performances and increase the number of tickets available for sale based on safety, according to the plan.

Local governments have also beefed up efforts to encourage music performance activities in a bid to stimulate consumption growth. In Southwest China's Sichuan province, the organizing units that introduce large-scale concerts and music festivals in 2025 will receive an incentive of up to 5 million yuan based on the total number of ticket sales and sales revenue.

Dongguan in South China capitalized on the debut of the Strawberry Music Festival during the holiday, rolling out more than 500 cultural activities and six tourism routes to transform festival buzz into economic gains.

XINHUA



A view of the opening ceremony of the 2025 Summer Lawn Concert in Haikou, Hainan province, on May 1. SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tax refund policies spur inbound tourism industry

Overseas visitors' expenditure grows almost 245% during May Day holiday

BEIJING — China witnessed a vibrant surge in inbound tourist spending during the recent May Day holiday as more foreign visitors flocked to attractions and left with full shopping bags, driven by the country's recently optimized tax refund policies.

Central bank data revealed that the number of transactions made by inbound visitors and processed through card payment giant China UnionPay or NetsUnion Clearing Corp, a Chinese online payment clearing house, increased nearly 245 percent over the five-day holiday, with the total transaction value up over 128 percent year-on-year.

On mobile platforms, popular Chinese payment app Alipay reported a 180 percent rise in inbound tourist spending between May 1 and 3, while WeChat Pay recorded nearly triple overseas user transaction volume and value figures in the Chinese mainland compared to the same period last year.

This rise in inbound consumption is the fruit of China's latest push to encourage foreign tourist spending. In late April, the country introduced a package of measures

to optimize its departure tax refund policy, including lowering the minimum purchase threshold for refunds, raising the cash refund ceiling, expanding the network of participating stores and widening the range of products available.

Overseas travelers in China can now claim a tax refund if they spend at least 200 yuan (\$27.62) at a single store in a single day and meet other relevant requirements, with refunds available in multiple forms, including mobile, bank and cash payments. The upper limit for cash refunds has been raised to 20,000 yuan.

China's metropolises led the shopping surge. From May 1 to 5, Beijing welcomed some 104,000 inbound tourists, up 42.4 percent year-on-year, whose spending saw a 48 percent year-on-year increase.

In Shanghai, tax-refund-on-departure sales jumped 120 percent in value during the holiday, and the amount of tax refunded increased 130 percent. So far, 1,013 enterprises have registered for departure tax refund services, covering more than 3,300 branded stores.

China's streamlined tax refund process has also had an impact on

figures. Right before this year's May Day holiday, taxation authorities in Shanghai introduced self-service machines that allow foreign shoppers to submit most of their transaction details for their tax refund applications by scanning their passport and receipts.

In the southwestern city of Chengdu, a refund-upon-purchase service, which allows eligible tourists to receive tax refunds instantly at retail outlets rather than waiting until they leave the country, benefited many foreign tourists during the holiday.

"It's so convenient that I'm planning to buy more," said a tourist from Singapore who received a refund of over 4,000 yuan when he bought two pieces of luggage at Chengdu IFS, one of the biggest shopping malls in the city.

"Providing overseas travelers with a greater variety of shopping options and more convenient tax refund services will stimulate inbound consumption and support China's high-standard opening-up and economic growth," said Chen Binkai, vice-president of the Central University of Finance and Economics.

China introduced its departure tax refund policy for overseas travelers in 2015. Inbound tourist spending has increased over the years as China opens wider to glob-

al visitors by facilitating visas, payments and accommodation.

The country now grants unilateral visa-free entry to people from 38 countries, and has extended its visa-free transit period to 240 hours for travelers from 54 countries. About 380,000 foreigners entered China under these arrangements during the May Day holiday, a year-on-year increase of 72.7 percent.

China is also accelerating its development of international consumption center cities to stimulate inbound spending further. The country is working to transform five cities — Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin and Chongqing — into major shopping centers.

In 2024, the number of inbound foreign travelers to those five cities doubled compared to the previous year. Together, they now account for nearly 70 percent of the country's departure tax refund stores and more than half of imported consumer goods.

"China's inbound consumption holds great growth potential," said Vice-Commerce Minister Sheng Qiuping, noting that last year, spending by overseas visitors contributed about 0.5 percent of the country's GDP, compared to 1 to 3 percent in other major economies.

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Tariff detente positive news, but only initial step

EAGLE EYE

By Luo Hairong

Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng, the lead negotiator regarding Sino-US trade and economic affairs, met with lead persons from the other side — US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer — in Geneva from May 10 to 11. It was the first such high-level meeting between the two sides amid the current tariff frictions.

After a barrage of bullying tariffs and technological restrictions from the United States, China has firmly defended its own interests — being neither arrogant nor submissive — and successfully withstood Washington's pressure. In doing so, China has set a powerful example for all countries and regions, especially those from the Global South.

The launch of such a high-level meeting between China and the US has great significance. First, the softening US stance signals the failure of its maximum pressure strategy on China.

Under the banner of "Make America Great Again", Washington tried to disrupt global trade order and suppress China's economic rise through baseless fentanyl-related tariffs, unfair "reciprocal" duties, harsh tech restrictions and reckless forced decoupling from Chinese supply chains.

Yet, as China's fiscal and monetary stimulus policies began to take effect and its dual-circulation economic strategy advanced, the resilience of China's economy came into focus. Meanwhile, the US has been plagued by severe inflation risks, rising financial market volatility and a sharp decline in the dollar's credibility.

There are no winners in a trade war, but the US has shown greater vulnerability than China. In short, Washington didn't get the call from Beijing it had hoped for — and has now come to the table seeking cooperation.

Second, multilateral rules are a vital means for developing countries to safeguard their interests.

Washington's crude "reciprocal tariffs" clearly violate WTO rules and defy the logic of global economic cooperation. Although the US has tried to manipulate its international standing and cripple the WTO's dispute resolution mechanism, the actual impact on China's economy has been far less than expected.

This proves that US unilateralism cannot break China's deep integration with globalization — and also highlights that countries like China



A cargo ship carrying foreign trade containers drives out of Qingdao Port in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, on May 12. YU FANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

China's export to the US

Unit: billion



Source: China's General Administration of Customs

Neither China nor the US can grow without the other. Since its reform and opening-up, China has undergone a dramatic transformation. Openness has been a cornerstone of its rapid economic growth and integration into globalization. A peaceful environment and a win-win approach are deeply embedded in China's development model.

rely on the multilateral system to protect their development space.

Third, China's willingness to engage in trade talks reflects both a defense of its rights and a response to calls from businesses and consumers on both sides.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said

that US companies "do not want tariffs and other issues to further complicate an already difficult bilateral economic relationship".

Globally, many economies have urged dialogue and cooperation between the world's top two economic powers. Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong stated

that ASEAN nations hope Sino-US talks can serve as "guardrails" in the relationship, warning that any escalation would bring disastrous consequences for the world.

In addition, China and the US must share development opportunities.

First, neither China nor the US can grow without the other. Since its reform and opening-up, China has undergone a dramatic transformation. Openness has been a cornerstone of its rapid economic growth and integration into globalization. A peaceful environment and a win-win approach are deeply embedded in China's development model.

China has long been a major source of goods for the US and a key destination for its services, proving that cooperation benefits both sides. Second, the US must recognize

the development aspirations of China and other emerging economies. In a globalized world, countries like China have been able to integrate rapidly and elevate their economic and geopolitical standing.

Developing countries deserve fair opportunities — based on mutual respect, equal consultation and mutual benefit. They also seek a fair voice in trade negotiations and a just global system. This is why many emerging economies continue to support multilateralism, and why the US must take these demands seriously.

Third, reforming global trade rules requires joint efforts from both China and the US. The international trading system built after World War II laid the foundation for decades of growth.

But now, advances in technology and new business models — such as

cross-border e-commerce — don't fit with the current rules.

Addressing these challenges requires close cooperation between developed economies like the US and emerging powers like China.

As tariff levels have broadly declined, there's limited room left for further liberalization in goods trade. Future breakthroughs lie in areas like service trade liberalization and fair trade mechanisms, none of which can be shaped without Sino-US cooperation. Only by working together can both sides, and the world, unlock new growth opportunities.

The writer is an associate researcher at the Institute of World Economy of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Green power projects key to building new type rural energy system

MAIN STREET

By Hu Yuemei

As Chinese modernization necessitates the accelerated comprehensive vitalization of rural areas, the country's "No 1 Central Document" for 2025 released on Feb 23 proposed to "consolidate and enhance the level of rural power supply".

Electricity is a vital force for the comprehensive vitalization of rural areas, and power grid is an essential infrastructure asset for this vitalization. It is therefore necessary to adhere to both goal-oriented and problem-oriented approaches, promote the consolidation and elevation of rural power supply levels in a location-specific, scenario-specific and time-specific manner, strengthen the support and guarantee capabilities of the power grid, and hasten the standardization of urban and rural power services so as to bolster the building of a new type of rural energy system, and provide strong, reliable, safe, efficient, green and low-carbon power support for the comprehensive vitalization of rural areas.

First, it is essential to stick to location-specific and precise policymaking approaches to promote the high-quality construction of modern rural power grids. Currently, the electrification level of production and livelihoods in rural areas is rising steadily, with continuous growth in power demand. Coupled with the booming development of renewable energy in rural areas and the accelerated penetration of new energy vehicles, the energy consumption structure in rural areas has undergone remarkable changes, and rural power grids face new and higher development requirements. In recent years, although rural power grids have experienced multiple rounds of construction and transformation, there is still much room for improvement, and people's need for better power supply quality is becoming increasingly urgent. It is necessary to set the goal of building a modern rural power grid, coordinate the needs of power supply and energy transformation based on the development stage and industrial features of rural power grids in different regions, formulate differentiated and precise development plans, moderately front-load the construction of rural power grids, and enhance the power supply guarantee capabilities in rural areas so as to ensure sufficient electricity

supply for the economic and social development of rural regions and agricultural production. By focusing on solving the problems of unbalanced and insufficient development between urban and rural power grids, it is imperative to encourage and guide additional investment in rural power grids, address shortcomings, strengthen weak links and remedy bottlenecks in a bid to improve and optimize the grid structure, lift the standards of disaster prevention and mitigation, and enhance the application of digital and intelligent technologies to further improve the comprehensive carrying capacity and disaster resistance of rural power grids.

Second, it is vital to follow the trend and promote the development and utilization of distributed renewable energy in an active and orderly manner. China's rural regions are rich in wind, solar and biomass energy assets, which are important foundations and advantageous conditions for rural vitalization. In recent years, with the introduction of favorable policies such as the development of whole-county rooftop distributed photovoltaic power generation — and the breakthrough development of wind and photovoltaic technologies and equipment — the development and utilization of new energy in rural areas has seen enormous

progress and has become a powerful engine for rural development in the new era. However, the randomness and volatility of distributed renewable energy output pose great challenges to the balanced regulation and flexible operation of the power system, which requires coordinated efforts from policy guidance, technological control and operational guarantees to improve the consumption and utilization levels of new energy. We must adhere to the principle of "scientific layout, orderly development, nearby connectivity and local consumption" to balance the development needs, scale and construction sequences of various types of new energy, and ensure that distributed renewable energy can be "generated, supplied and utilized well". It is also necessary to follow the path of coordinated development of "resources, grid, load and storage" to strengthen research into the construction of new types of rural power systems, focus on promoting the application of new technologies such as micro-grids, new storage modes of energy and virtual power plants, and actively promote new business models, modes of green power and green certificate trading and integrated energy services so as to further improve the flexibility and regulatory capabilities of the rural

power system and the utilization rate of new energy.

Third, it is essential to adapt to the times, improve power quality and increase its efficiency to bolster the green and low-carbon transformation of rural energy consumption. Rural energy, as an important part of China's energy system, is the cornerstone and guarantee for the comprehensive vitalization of rural areas. With the in-depth implementation of the "dual carbon" strategy — peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060 — and the rural vitalization strategy, alongside the accelerated advancement of pilot counties for the rural energy revolution, a modern rural energy system characterized by clean, low-carbon and multi-energy integration is being rapidly formed, which has played a positive role in meeting the clean energy needs of rural areas, stimulating rural economic growth and promoting farmers' income generation. However, it should be noted that traditional energy sources still dominate energy consumption in rural areas, with a low energy-utilization efficiency and high carbon emission levels, making the energy revolution in rural areas a long and arduous task. It is imperative to start from and focus on meeting people's growing need for better lives in terms of energy

consumption, ensure power supply for clean heating through methods of "coal-to-electricity" and "electricity to irrigation wells", develop high-standard cropland, accelerate the realization of "county-wide coverage" of charging stations suitable for new energy vehicles and "township-wide coverage" of charging piles, and accelerate the transformation of rural areas from "having access to electricity" to "having good usage of electricity". It is also crucial to explore replicable and promotional typical models for the rural energy revolution, build pilot demonstration projects such as "agro-photovoltaic complementarity" and "fishery-photovoltaic complementarity" in agricultural production, create innovative examples such as all-electric homesteads, zero-carbon scenic spots and vehicle-grid interaction in rural tourism, and increase the proportion of electricity in rural energy consumption by drawing upon the experiences gained on key points, in a bid to help realize the goals of carbon peak and carbon neutrality, as well as rural vitalization as soon as possible.

The writer is from the Party School of the CPC Dezhou Municipal Committee.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

Beijing and Arab states setting good example of unity and cooperation in pursuit of shared future

Showing the strategic importance China attaches to China-Arab relations, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, the current chairperson of the Council of Heads of the League of Arab States, on Saturday, extending his congratulations on the convening of the 34th Arab League Summit in Baghdad that day.

Xi said that the vigorous development of relations between China and Arab states in recent years has set an example of unity and cooperation among developing countries, with Arab countries' adherence to independence and autonomy, promotion of development and rejuvenation, and safeguarding of fairness and justice playing an increasingly important and active role in advancing the influence of the Global South.

The three pivotal initiatives President Xi has put forward — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative — address the pressing issues of the times. They are not only a call to action to address the global governance deficit, trust deficit, development deficit and peace deficit, but offer viable pathways and robust support for the building of a global community with a shared future.

Putting these into practice, China and the Arab countries have reached a broad consensus on advancing cooperation across the board, pursuing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and promoting inter-civilization dialogue. This will help translate the vision for China-Arab relations into tangible benefits for the two sides.

As Xi said in his message, China is willing to work with Arab states to deepen mutual political trust, push forward mutually beneficial cooperation, increase people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and join hands on the path toward modernization.

China and the Arab countries should further synergize their development strategies to make their cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, energy, science and technology a fine example of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. They should also explore new areas for cooperation such as artificial intelligence,

investment, finance and new energy, so that they can embark together on an innovative and green path to prosperity.

In the process, the two sides should work together to make their relations a paradigm of harmonious coexistence between civilizations by promoting people-to-people exchanges.

In their gathering in the Iraqi capital, the Arab leaders called for an immediate end to Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip and for humanitarian aid to be allowed into the Palestinian enclave without conditions.

China is willing to further strengthen its coordination with the Arab countries to help create the conditions for the resolution of the crisis.

China firmly supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and it supports Palestine's full membership in the United Nations. China has stressed that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should not continue indefinitely, and justice should not be absent forever. The Arab countries are well aware that China upholds justice and peace on the Palestinian issue, and that China has no self-calculations in its Middle East policy, a region some major countries regard as a focus of their geopolitical game.

Looking ahead, China will remain a trustworthy friend and partner of the Arab states. Through consultation and understanding and joint efforts to strengthen their cooperation for mutual benefit, China and the Arab countries can send a strong statement of their common desire for a more harmonious world.

Under the principle of "planning together, building together, and benefiting together", China and the Arab countries can jointly champion universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, and set a model for meaningful South-South cooperation.

As Xi said in his message, it is to be hoped that the second China-Arab States Summit, due to be held in China next year, will prove to be another significant milestone in the history of China-Arab ties and the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future, as that is in the interests of both sides and the world.

China-EU collaboration vital for sustainability

The official visit of Denmark's Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Lokke Rasmussen to China, from Saturday to Tuesday, and China's willingness to collaborate with France on multilateral international affairs, as expressed by Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng on Thursday while co-chairing the 10th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue, highlight the enduring partnership between China and the European Union.

The building of the bonds between China and the EU over the past five decades serves as a testament to the power of collaboration despite significant differences. With the world facing growing challenges and complexities, China and the EU have compelling reasons to reflect on the positive development trajectory of their relations over the past five decades. The founding principles of the European Economic Community in the midst of the Cold War era emphasized the promotion of economic development, stability, and closer relations among member states, reflecting a vision for a prosperous and interconnected Europe that accords with China's vision of a global community with a shared future.

While the EEC's initial focus due to geopolitical considerations leaned toward strengthening ties with the United States during the Cold War, the foresight of the founding members in recognizing the importance of cultivating relations with China underscores their strategic wisdom. Today, European leaders should display similar foresight and vision, acknowledging the shifting global dynamics.

Reviewing the journey from the divergent landscapes that characterized China and the EU in 1975 to the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003 highlights the remarkable progress achieved through mutual cooperation. The exponential growth in bilateral trade, which surged from \$2.4 billion annually 50 years ago to \$786 billion in 2024, highlights the strength and depth of the partnership between the two sides.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lin Jian's emphasis on the extensive dialogue mechanisms and shared understandings between China and the EU highlights the constructive strides that have been made in their relationship. The substantial development dividend that

China has been able to share with its trading partners after its accession to the World Trade Organization and its attraction of foreign direct investments, coupled with its significant contributions to global economic growth, underscore the mutual benefits produced by collaboration.

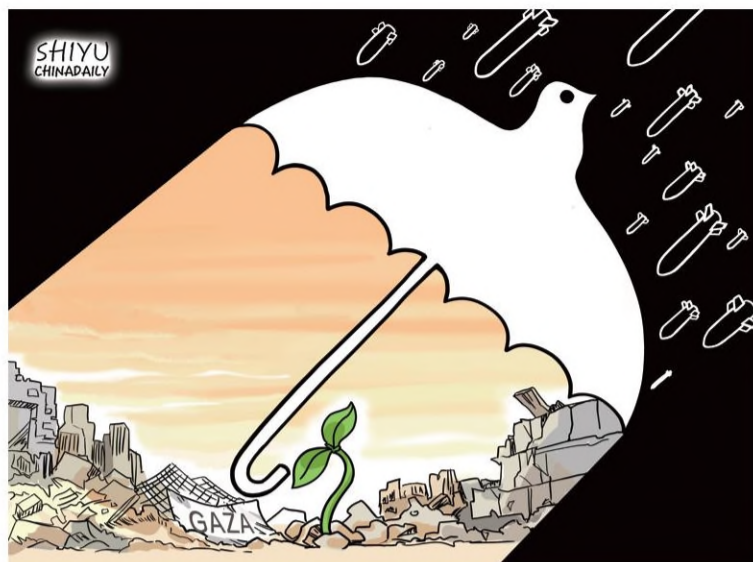
To further enhance their collaboration, China and the EU must prioritize strategic communication, foster mutual trust, and work toward a shared vision for a sustainable and environmentally conscious global community. Trade and investment, when conducted with a focus on mutual benefit and transcending ideological boundaries, would yield substantial gains for both parties.

In a world where challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and economic disparities require collective action, it is imperative to avoid divisive approaches that threaten global unity. Embracing cooperation over confrontation and rejecting a zero-sum mentality is essential for fostering sustainable growth and innovation in an increasingly interconnected world.

While external pressures and influences may impact decision-making, it is crucial for the EU to navigate its relationships with prudence and autonomy. Decisions such as the risk-based approach to Huawei 5G under US pressure and restrictive investment screening policies targeting Chinese companies risk hindering progress toward shared green and digital ambitions. By embracing mutually beneficial partnerships with Chinese entities, the EU can drive advancements in areas such as electric vehicles and renewable energy, solidifying its position as a leader in climate action.

The China-EU partnership stands as a testament to the benefits of mutual respect, shared benefit, multilateralism, and collaborative efforts. As the US navigates its changing role on the global stage, the EU should assert its independence and chart a course that aligns with its long-term interests and values. By nurturing and expanding their partnership, China and the EU can pave the way for a prosperous and interconnected future that lifts not only themselves but the entire world. It is through such strategic collaborations and forward-thinking partnerships that the world can navigate the complexities of the times and build a more sustainable and inclusive global community.

Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Two-state solution is path to lasting Middle East peace

The guns of Gaza have not fallen silent, yet a flicker of hope has emerged. On Saturday, Israel and Hamas resumed ceasefire talks through Qatari and United States mediators in Doha. Under a proposed new deal, Hamas has agreed to release more hostages in exchange for a 60-day truce and Israel releasing Palestinian prisoners, according to a senior Hamas official.

But the timing is a bitter irony. Just before the talks began, the Israeli military announced that it had escalated operations in Gaza, carrying out a wave of airstrikes and deploying additional ground forces. The intensified assault marks the start of Israel's "Gideon's Chariots" operation, amid the deadliest wave of strikes in Gaza in months. And the military operation is the reason, according to Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz, that Hamas has changed its position and agreed to return to the negotiation table.

It is a tragedy that talks inch forward while bombs keep falling, leaving civilians trapped between officials' promises and war's relentless cruelty. At least 64 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, the Civil Defense in Gaza said.

What is the core obstacle for the two sides to end the 19-month war? A fundamental mismatch in demands.

Hamas insists on a full Israeli withdrawal and lasting truce; Israel refuses to end the war before destroying Hamas and recovering all the remaining hostages.

Thousands have died since Israel resumed its strikes in the Gaza Strip on March 18, following the collapse of a fragile ceasefire which lasted two months. At least 3,131 Palestinians have been killed and 8,632 others injured, bringing the overall death toll in Gaza since the war began in October 2023 to 53,272, mostly women and children, with a total of 120,673 people injured, according to health authorities in Gaza on Saturday.

The international outcry over Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe grew louder over the weekend, with European leaders issuing urgent calls for action. In a show of unity, seven European nations, Norway, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Spain, released a joint statement on Friday condemning the crisis. The coalition reaffirmed its unwavering support for Palestinian self-determination and the two-state solution, vowing to leverage all diplomatic channels at the United Nations while coordinating with regional partners to achieve lasting peace.

On Saturday, European Council President Antonio Costa took to social media to express his shock at the deteriorating situation, demand-

ing an immediate end to the violence.

On the same day, Arab leaders at the 34th Arab League Summit in Baghdad, Iraq, called for an immediate end to Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip and to allow aid into the Palestinian territories without conditions. They also promised to contribute to the reconstruction of the territory once the war stops.

China's stance remains unwavering, that only a permanent ceasefire and the two-state solution can break the deadly cycle of violence. As China's deputy permanent representative to the UN said on Thursday, Israel's blockade and military operations have pushed Gaza into "unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe" since October 2023. Starvation, forced displacement and attacks on hospitals and schools violate international law, yet impunity persists.

The world must act. Temporary pauses in the fighting are not enough. Without a durable ceasefire, humanitarian aid remains a drop in the ocean. This is not just a regional crisis, it is a test of global conscience. China, alongside other peace-loving nations, will continue pushing for a just and lasting solution: an independent Palestine based on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The path to peace is clear — but it requires the courage to choose dialogue over destruction.

— ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

US economy stumbles on tariffs and debt

China implemented its first reserve requirement ratio cut this year on Thursday, which is expected to provide about 1 trillion yuan (\$138.7 billion) of long-term liquidity to the market. The country also began to implement a package of financial policies on May 7.

These moves are expected to effectively support the stable growth of the real economy by helping optimize the structure of the central bank's liquidity provision to the banking system, reduce bank liability costs, and enhance the stability of bank liabilities.

There is still a lot of room for implementing financial policies in the future, demonstrating that the tools in China's policy toolbox are very rich.

It was against this backdrop that ING Group raised its growth forecast for China this year to 4.7 percent. It has forecast that China's economic growth may be higher this year if a Sino-US economic and trade agreement can be reached within the 90-day deadline.

Morgan Stanley predicts that China's GDP growth in the second quarter may exceed the current expectation of 4.5 percent. UBS also raised its forecast for China's economic growth this year on Tuesday.

But the picture for the US economy seems more bleak.

Moody's Ratings announced that it had downgraded the US credit rating from the highest level of Aaa to Aa1 on Friday. After that, the world's largest economy was downgraded to below the highest rating of Aaa by all three major rating agencies.

Data shows that the total debt of the US federal government has exceeded \$36 trillion. For more than a decade, the growth level of the US government debt and interest payment rate has been significantly higher than that of other countries with similar ratings.

Although the US has significant economic and financial advantages, these advantages are no longer enough to fully offset the deterioration of fiscal indicators. The out-of-control budget deficit means that the US government's borrowing will accelerate, pushing up interest rates in the long run.

Moody's Ratings said in a report in March that even in the best-case scenario envisioned by analysts, the fiscal weakness looks set to continue.

In recent years, the US' fiscal deficit has been close to \$2 trillion per year, accounting for more than 6 percent of GDP. In the past, US Treasuries have been a symbol of security and stability, and a top choice for investors in times of crisis and turmoil. But a series of policies since the incumbent US administration took office have led to a significant reduction in US assets and a surge in yields.

The timing of Moody's Ratings downgrade is particularly sensitive because earlier in the day, the US president's massive tax reform plan failed to pass due to obstruction by hard-line Republicans within the US House of Representatives Budget Committee.

If the bill, known as "The One, Big, Beautiful Bill", is passed, it will add about \$4 trillion to the US structural

deficit over the next decade.

In addition, the US economy has also been significantly affected by the US' tariff policy. According to data from the US Department of Commerce, the US GDP shrank by 0.3 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of this year. This is the worst quarterly performance of the US economy since 2022.

The expectation that the US economy is still facing the risk of recession will further increase inflation pressure and the downward pressure on growth. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said last week the US may be entering a period of more frequent and more persistent supply shocks, which is a huge challenge for both the US economy and the de facto central bank. The Fed chair also expressed his concerns that the US job market will cool down in the future, the unemployment rate may rise, and economic activity may slow down.

Also, the impact of tariff policies on US companies and consumers on rising production and living costs is still evident. Confidence among small business owners and consumers continues to decline. The latest data released by the University of Michigan showed that the US consumer sentiment index fell to 50.8 in May, falling for the fifth consecutive month and hitting the second-lowest value on record.

That being said, what the US needs to do is to focus on domestic policy adjustments and collaborate with other economies to achieve more sustainable growth.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

COMMENT



Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM
China and the World Roundtable | China's Smart Tourism

Editor's note: Amid the rapid advancement of digital technology, China's tourism sector is undergoing a remarkable transformation, fusing cutting-edge technology with rich cultural heritage to provide immersive, multidimensional experiences for tourists. Four experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Natalia Bayona

Future of tourism human-centered

Tourism has always been one of the most powerful tools for human connection. As the most human-centered of all economic sectors, it brings together people, cultures and ideas, building bridges where there were once borders. Today, as we celebrate China Tourism Day (May 19) and look toward a future shaped by transformation and innovation, it is important to ask: How can tourism continue to thrive in a world that's constantly changing? The answer lies in embracing technology, particularly artificial intelligence, while staying true to the sector's core: its people.

The global tourism sector is undergoing significant changes. From the recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic to the acceleration of climate action and digitalization, the industry is evolving rapidly. Tourism today accounts for 10 percent of global GDP and supports one in 10 jobs worldwide. However, its true potential goes beyond these numbers. Tourism is a powerful tool for fostering sustainable development, empowering youth and driving innovation.

China is a key player in this new tourism landscape. With its strong digital infrastructure, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to modernization, China is ideally placed to lead global efforts in rethinking how we travel — smartly, inclusively, and responsibly.

Artificial intelligence is no longer a concept for the future; it's a reality today. In many ways, AI is becoming as essential as the internet itself, offering transformative potential for the tourism industry when used responsibly and ethically.

In the tourism sector, AI enhances efficiency, accessibility and personalization. For example, at UN Tourism, we are using AI to localize learning through our Tourism Online Academy, which offers more than 70 courses in five languages. A new AI-powered tutor adjusts its communication style based on learners' nationality and language preferences. This means a Colombian student receives content tailored to Colombian Spanish, not just generic Spanish, making tourism education more accessible, but also



The author is the executive director of UN Tourism.

more inclusive and human.

Similarly, we are also piloting AI-driven chatbots to support workers who are the backbone of our sector — taxi drivers, tour guides and hotel staff — who often don't have time or access to traditional training. Through platforms such as WhatsApp or WeChat, they can now study in small segments, receive daily lessons, and earn certifi-

ates supported by UN Tourism and national governments. These innovations are democratizing knowledge and creating new opportunities for lifelong learning in tourism.

AI is also becoming a valuable tool for "destination management". By analyzing visitor flows, travel preferences and seasonal peaks, local authorities can now anticipate challenges like overcrowding and overtourism. Data-driven decision-making allows for smarter promotion strategies, improved infrastructure planning, and ultimately, better visitor experiences and outcomes for local communities.

However, it's important to note that technology is not here to replace people. It is here to enhance human

creativity, sharpen intuition and improve decision-making. As I often say, a human plus AI is stronger than either alone. When used responsibly, AI can help tourism professionals tell richer stories, engage diverse audiences in their native languages, and promote destinations with greater cultural sensitivity and accuracy.

At UN Tourism, we are committed to empowering young people. They are not only the travelers of tomorrow — they are the innovators of today. Supporting tourism entrepreneurship, especially in the Global South, is one of our top priorities. Through our "Global Youth Tourism Startup Competitions", we've seen firsthand the creativity and energy young people bring when given the right platform to grow.

China, with its deep cultural heritage and advanced technological ecosystem, offers fertile ground for nurturing youth-led tourism innovation. From AI-powered translation apps to immersive virtual reality travel experiences, Chinese youth are already shaping the future of tourism. It is vital that we continue to invest in their ideas, give them the tools they need to succeed, and include them in global decision-making.

The future of tourism must be smart, inclusive, sustainable, and ethical. As we embrace new technologies like AI, we must also uphold strong values: transparency, data privacy, cultural respect and social inclusion. Technology is only as effective as the purpose it serves. At UN Tourism, we are committed to ensuring that digital transformation strengthens the social fabric of tourism, rather than undermining it.

On this China Tourism Day, let us celebrate the resilience of our sector, the richness of China's tourism leadership, and the incredible potential of human creativity when combined with innovation. Together, by placing people at the center and technology at their service, we can create a future for tourism that is more dynamic, more human and more hopeful than ever before.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Yin Yunqiang and Wang Dujuan

Digital tech revives glory of Sichuan culture

By enlivening intangible cultural heritages and recreating digital scenic spots, Sichuan province is using a "culture-plus-technology" model to showcase its cultural soft power, enabling 63.72 million trips during the Spring Festival holiday that generated 34.78 billion yuan (\$4.8 billion) in revenue.

Sichuan's efforts to bring cultural relics to life have won widespread praise. The provincial authorities have used artificial intelligence in the digital exhibition hall of the Sanxingdui Museum to help a Shang Dynasty bronze tree to shine in "divine brilliance", and 3D holographic projection to reproduce ancient ritual scenes. These digital creations have helped the museum to attract 3.23 million tours, marking a three-fold growth.

Decoding cultural relics using digital means also creates surprises. Digital collections, themed "the fairyland of ancient Sichuan" — known as Shu in ancient times as it was home to the ancient Shu civilization — are selling like hot cakes by integrating the bronze mask with elements such as the giant panda and the face-changing performances of Sichuan Opera.

At the 2025 Spring Festival Gala, hosted by the China Media Group, Li Ziqi, a social media influencer known for promoting Chinese culture, made a stunning debut in a look that incorporated 131 elements of China's intangible cultural heritage. Her appearance vividly showcased the creative potential of presenting traditional culture through modern design and media.

Technology has also helped rebuild scenic spots, giving visitors an experience in "time-travelling"



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and generating substantial tourism revenue. For instance, during the Spring Festival holiday, the night tour on the Jinjiang River, themed "Vibrant Year in Chengdu, New Vibes of Jinjiang River", welcomed 466,300 visits.

Besides, the digital scroll has brought ancient scenes to life through 5G and 8K technologies. Fifty themed boats cruise along the banks of the Jinjiang River in the 3D projection, representing the historical scenes of greeting the cruise boats.

The Mount Qingcheng-Duijiangyan scenic spot, on its part, has developed a digital experience center dedicated to immersive exploration of Taoist culture by using mixed reality technology to reproduce the scene when Zhang Daoling founded Taoism. The scene of visitors receiving "digital blessings", projected through motion-sensing interaction, is complemented by a series of themed events including "encounter with Erlang Shen". The innovative charm of this technology-powered immersive cultural experience attracted an impressive 594,800 visits during Spring Festival.

As an effective means to modernize traditional villages, digital technology supports rural vitalization. The newly built Qiang culture digi-

tal museum in Sichuan's Aba (Ngawa) Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture has recreated the ancient Qiang watchtower construction technique using 3D modeling, which visitors can experience through visual reality in the Qiang embroidery workshop.

In Lizhuang ancient town, known as the "most admirable ancient town on the Yangtze River", a brand-new academia-culture-tourism complex has been built on the former site of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture. The structure in Sichuan's Yibin city, which is part of a holistic layout of "one hall, one heritage site, one pond, one street, and 24 courtyards", recreates, via a digital sandbox, the scenes of Liang Sicheng, known as the "father of modern Chinese architecture", surveying and mapping ancient architecture.

This innovative model, combining academic features with digital twin technology, showcases the evolution of traditional architectural craftsmanship in a modern context, transforming historical memories into contemporary experiences.

A systemic upgrade of the industry ecosystem is also underway. The transformation of Dongjiao Jiye, which means an eastern suburban memory park, is a benchmark.

Repurposed from a former State-owned electronics tube factory, the site has been developed into a cultural complex, which today is home to nearly 300 cultural-tech enterprises. It has established a full industry chain encompassing brand incubation, digital technology empowerment and scene renewal.

The development of transportation in Sichuan, too, is boosting tourism, with tourism highways making journeys more memorable. Three highways have been selected in the first batch of the national "tourism highway project". Of particular significance is the completion of the grand loop in western Sichuan, a highway network that connects Chengdu, Ya'an, the Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture and the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, as well as the iconic scenic areas of Jiuzhaigou and Daocheng Yading. This network has made the vision of "swift arrival, immersive travel" a reality.

With the application of advanced digital technology, the once difficult roads of Shu have been turned into smooth culture-tourism highways. Sichuan is exploring the deeper logic of culture-tourism integration to not only breathe new life into the cultural heritage of ancient Shu in the digital age, but also offer dynamic Sichuan experience to visitors through systemic industry restructuring.

In Sichuan, every landscape carries the weight of cultural history, and every practice of innovation adds a new story to the region's legacy of brilliance.

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Yang Jinsong

Exploring China where history and modernity collide

China has been steadily opening up its various sectors to the outside world by, among other things, expanding visa-free access and extending visa-free transit stays for people from more countries. The series of tourism facilitation policies it has introduced includes more convenient payment options for foreign visitors, tax refund schemes for overseas travelers, and simplified ticketing procedures for popular tourist attractions.

According to the National Immigration Administration, ports across the country recorded 9.2 million entries by foreign visitors in the first quarter of 2025, a 40.2 percent year-on-year increase, while trade in travel-related services grew at a rapid pace, with imports and exports totaling 584.9 billion yuan (\$81 billion), up 21.8 percent year-on-year. Travel services thus became the largest sector within China's service trade portfolio.

China is committed to modernizing its tourism sector to ensure it better serves foreign visitors, showcases China's image, fosters mutual learning among nations, and promotes economic growth. In this context, the continued expansion of unilateral visa-free policy, the optimization of visa-free transit policy and improvements in tax refunds and payment systems have created more choices for inbound tourists. As a result, China is attracting more foreign tourists.

The accelerated recovery of airlines worldwide, including the increase in the number and frequency of flights, has helped boost inbound tourism. According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, Chinese and foreign airlines operated an average of 6,395 international passenger flights per week in the first quarter of this year, linking China with 78 countries. And in response to growing international travel, 42 major airports, 41 airlines and 12 ticket sales platforms have improved their payment systems, including allowing foreign visitors to use both domestic and international bank cards, and exchange foreign currency.

In the past, inbound tourists' itineraries were dominated by traditional attractions such as the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, the Great Wall in Beijing and Mount Huangshan in Anhui province. But nowadays, thanks to the cultural scenes presented in the video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, the vibrant daily life in China showcased in videos by US influencer IShowSpeed, and modern metropolises and idyllic towns full of local charm have all become must-visit attractions for many foreign tourists.

Besides, China's diverse tourism offerings, from major sports events to niche experiences like RV camping and yacht tours, are attracting an increasing number of foreign tourists and offering trendsetting experiences.

The country's tourism sector is undergoing a transformation driven by innovative market players. As part of this transformation, tourism companies, tech firms, cultural organizations and payment platforms are collaborating to offer personalized travel experiences and culturally-inspired products for tourists. These stakeholders are turning government policies such as visa facilitation and tax refunds into competitive advantages by quickly responding to market demands.

It won't be an exaggeration to say inbound tourism is shining brighter, because it is no longer confined to simplistic "visit the Great Wall and Forbidden City" experiences but instead, it is showcasing China's multi-layered and multi-dimensional development. Behind this transformation lies the impetus of policy dividends, the evolution of the market and the high-quality development of inbound tourism.

Traditional inbound tourism destinations are generating fresh appeal, as former "must-visit" sites are quietly upgrading into "immersive", "interactive" and regenerative tourism ecosystems. At the core of this transformation is their successful effort to redefine their positions in the international tourism market through reinvention, product iteration and innovative services.

For instance, traditional settings are being reshaped into interactive, narrative-rich and culturally resonant spaces. Through live theatrical experiences, history is being brought to life, while micro-vacation sites are transforming into living communities.

On the other hand, new inbound tourism destinations and sites are attracting more and more international visitors, with many second- and third-tier cities and even small towns becoming popular with international travelers.

A similar trend is evident in the source of tourists, with people from emerging markets, particularly from Belt and Road countries, showing rapid growth. An increasing number of tourists from countries such as Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Thailand are now visiting China. These tourists are not only eager to explore China's second- and third-tier cities but also tend to build closer cultural and economic ties with China. Making this possible are improved high-speed rail access, seamless digital payments, and strategic social media campaigns.

The influx of international tourists is elevating China's domestic tourism sector through service upgrade and product innovation. This cross-pollination, combined with a robust domestic market, has created a virtuous cycle, with local attractions elevating their standards and international visitors optimizing resource utilization.

Moreover, the linkage between inbound and outbound tourism is strengthening. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the number of outbound trips from China reached 146 million last year, injecting a great amount of certainty into the global tourism market and reinforcing international confidence in China's further opening-up.

As the Belt and Road Initiative advances, China will further improve its tourism facilitation policies by expanding visa-free access, streamlining payments, and upgrading multilingual services. With the focus shifting from quantitative to qualitative development of the tourism sector, more innovative offerings promise to further transform tourism from mere sightseeing to immersive experiences, writing a new chapter in global cultural exchanges.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 1:02:40 PM

Untangling threats to wild birds

China's efforts to deploy legal system to protect migratory birds paying off

Imagine a bird that can fit comfortably in the palm of your hand, flying thousands of kilometers from non-breeding grounds in the southern hemisphere to breeding grounds in China, Mongolia or Russia, navigating bad weather, evading predators and finding suitable stopover sites to rest and refuel only to end up caught in a mist net and a prolonged and painful death.

Unfortunately, this still happens to countless migratory birds every year. Some are trapped deliberately by poachers for the cage bird trade or for exotic food, while others are "by-catch" caught up in nets that

are used by farmers to protect their crops or aquaculture.

Four of the planet's nine major bird migration flyways intersect in China and, every spring, billions of birds migrate north to take advantage of the explosion of insects in the northern summer, allowing them to have more offspring more quickly than if they stayed further south. And of course in autumn, as winter's icy grip takes hold at northern latitudes, the vast majority of these birds must head south. So, twice a year, it is "rush hour" on these bird expressways. These awe-inspiring journeys are some of the most remarkable natural spectacles and most of these migratory birds are shared by multiple countries from as far north as Siberia in Russia and Alaska in the United States to as far south as Australia and New Zealand, and even Africa.

In recent years, the legal system has been deployed to protect wildlife in China, including birds and their habitats. Major improvements in legislation have been made, such as the revised Wildlife Protection Law (revised in 2022) and the new Wetland Conservation Law (adopted

in 2021). Notably, protection of migration routes of migratory birds and other wildlife is explicitly stipulated in the draft environmental code, which was submitted to the country's top legislature for first reading last month and will combine over 30 laws into a single overarching framework. These actions underpin China's commitment to effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was agreed by more than 190 countries under China's presidency of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in late 2022.

However, even if the laws are good on paper, a bird can't call the police or go to court if it is in trouble. This is the same all around the world, and poses a challenge to the effective enforcement of environmental laws.

In response, China has developed innovative systems to ensure these laws are being implemented effectively. Beyond clarifying the duties of government agencies at all levels, procuratorates and qualified nongovernmental organization have been empowered to bring public interest cases to protect the environment. This system has proved to be remarkably effective, with tens of thousands of legal challenges being brought every year.

China's legal work to protect birds really took off in 2023, following a side event at the World Coastal Forum in Yancheng, East China's Jiangsu province. Senior prosecutors from the procuratorates from all coastal provinces attended, and met with bird conservation specialists. The conclusion was clear: the



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use of illegal bird killing mist nets must be controlled, to avoid huge numbers of unnecessary bird deaths, and prevent endangered bird species from going extinct.

Procuratorates at all levels quickly started a comprehensive campaign to tackle mist nets. They engaged with companies producing the nets, as well as e-commerce companies and local government agencies in farming communities. They also initiated public education programs and encouraged the use

of alternative bird deterrents. Ornithologists have even been brought together to research a standard for legal nets. Such a standard would enable a clear ban on mist nets, the tool of choice of poachers. At the same time, it would define the types of nets which are visible to birds, and which farmers can use to protect their crops.

This demonstrates China's unique ability to convene a range of stakeholders to address important and complex environmental issues.

This approach has since been applauded by world-leading conservation experts. Martin Harper, CEO of Birdlife International, the world's largest conservation partnership, has commented that this work has the potential to bend the curve of migratory bird population declines in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, the most threatened flyway in the world.

China's environmental NGOs have also successfully brought powerful cases for bird conservation. For example, in October 2024, Friends of Nature brought a case against Kuai-shou, a popular short video platform, for allegedly allowing people to advertise and sell illegal hunting equipment, including mist nets, on their platform. In 2023, the same NGO partnered with others in a case which led to a court order to halt a coastal development in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, which would have destroyed a globally important intertidal mudflat.

These initiatives are making a difference. Both the production and the sales of mist nets on e-commerce platforms have significantly decreased, and warning signs appear when you search for them. Poachers are being deterred from intentionally killing birds through public outreach programs and greater public awareness. Farmers of aquaculture products and crops are exploring and adopting alternative ways to protect their crops without killing birds, for example by using reflective materials that flutter in the wind, kites in the shape of predators such as hawks and acoustic devices.

If Chinese authorities are successful in developing a standard for "anti-bird nets" that allows farmers to protect their crops, it would pave the way for a ban on the public sale of nets that do not meet the standard, pulling the rug from under the poachers. At the same time, many wild birds are killed by mist nets in Southeast Asia, so a standard has the potential to be adopted more widely, potentially saving millions more migratory birds in the region and strengthening China's environmental reputation overseas.

If there is one thing we have learned from nature, it is that it is incredibly resilient. Given the chance, species can bounce back.

There are perhaps two species that are particularly vulnerable and that have suffered through the use of mist nets — the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and the Yellow-breasted Bunting, both now classified as critically endangered, just one step away from extinction. Halting the widespread use of mist nets would remove one of the biggest threats to these two species, providing a huge boost to their survival chances. Wouldn't it be incredible if we could witness recoveries in the population of these two species?

China's procuratorates, civil society, government agencies and public are making tremendous progress in tackling the problem of bird-killing mist nets. This effort should be actively continued, as it is set to be a game changer for migratory birds along the Asian flyways. It may also provide valuable experience which could benefit other countries in the region, as they step up their efforts to protect birds and habitats.

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LIN BOQIANG

Transition guide and helper

China will stay committed to promoting the construction of renewable energy systems and advancing global climate governance

On April 23, in a speech via video link at the Leaders Meeting on Climate and the Just Transition, President Xi Jinping said: "Since I announced China's goals for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality five years ago, we have built the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable energy system as well as the largest and most complete new energy industrial chain."

In this sense, China remains committed to promoting international cooperation and advancing global climate governance.

By the end of 2024, the cumulative installed capacity of China's renewable energy had reached 1.889 billion kilowatts, accounting for 56 percent of the country's total. Specifically, wind and solar power installations had reached 521 million kW and 887 million kW respectively, representing approximately 46 percent and 48 percent of the global totals.

China's renewable energy generation, including hydro power, reached 3.46 trillion kilowatt-hours in 2024, accounting for about 35 percent of the total electricity generated. The penetration rate of new energy vehicles surged from 5.4 percent in 2020 to 47.6 percent in 2024, while the number of charging infrastructure facilities for NEVs surged from 1.681 million to 12.818 million, gradually making NEVs the mainstream form of vehicle sales.

China has achieved basic self-sufficiency in core segments of the new energy supply chain, providing the world with high-quality and cost-effective new energy products. All top 10 photovoltaic module suppliers by volume in 2024 were Chi-

nese companies, supplying 70 percent of global PV components. Six of the world's top 10 wind turbine manufacturers are Chinese companies, supplying nearly 60 percent of installed capacity worldwide. Similarly, six Chinese companies were listed in the top 10 global power battery manufacturers in 2024, while Chinese NEVs command over 70 percent of global market share. In ecological and environmental protection, China has become the largest contributor to land greening efforts in the world and the main engine of global ecological progress.

China stepped up its greening efforts last year with 4.45 million hectares of forest planted. In 2024, the country also treated 2.78 million hectares of sandy and stony land. The completion of a green barrier around the Taklimakan Desert highlights China's commitment to combating desertification and sets a global example for desertification control. This is a huge achievement in human history.

However, international cooperation among countries has been disrupted, potentially impeding climate action.

The "reciprocal tariffs" imposed by the United States in April have triggered deep turmoil in global trade. In the guise of "fair trade", the US has imposed tariffs globally. The move violates the principle of comparative advantage and severely obstructs global climate governance through the following three impacts.

To start with, past US policies were aimed at forcing companies to shift manufacturing to neighboring countries of the US, such as Mexico, through nearshoring under regional trade frameworks such as the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. However, these regions rely heavily on fossil fuels. Such production relocation will significantly

increase product life cycle emissions and reverse the global decarbonization progress.

Using tariffs as a weapon for geopolitical purposes, the US is trying to force its trading partners to "pick sides". In the future, the US may continue to leverage its dominance in international rules to create hidden barriers, employing political coercion, rules-based obstacles and aid conditionality to pressure certain nations into abandoning Chinese new energy products and supply chains in favor of high-cost alternatives.

This would elevate the cost of global energy transition and slow it down. From the perspective of addressing climate change, suppressing China's low-cost new energy exports will create obstacles in responding to climate change and essentially squeeze humanity's living space in the long term.

A decline in global trade induced by the US tariffs will undercut developing countries' export incomes. According to estimates, the volume of global merchandise trade is expected to decline in 2025 under current tariff conditions, nearly 3 percentage points lower than the previous forecast based on a "low tariff" scenario, according to the World Trade Organization.

A decline in developing nations' export earnings will pressure their climate budgets. The fiscal budget originally allocated for the construction of renewable energy projects could be diverted toward maintaining fundamental trade balances. Shrinking export revenues may also prompt some developing countries to relax environmental regulations on traditional energy sectors in order to sustain economic growth, potentially regressing to high-carbon development pathways.

Confronting these challenges, China will stay committed to pro-

moting the construction of renewable energy systems, completing the clean energy transition, and advancing global climate governance.

Globalization represents an irresistible historical tide that no unilateral or protectionist measures can stem. The trade barriers imposed by the US under the guise of "reciprocal tariffs" are, in essence, a shortsighted move running counter to this globalizing momentum. China should take the following measures to build a global climate governance system through open cooperation and support green transition globally.

First, China should deepen collaboration with more nations to accelerate their energy transitions.

Capitalizing on its established industrial chains and technological strengths in PV and wind power sectors, China could facilitate the cross-border deployment of clean energy manufacturing bases. This involves simultaneously developing PV and wind projects with complementary storage infrastructure while enhancing project viability through resource exchanges, technology equity participation, and joint operation frameworks to create a win-win situation. Such initiatives will stimulate economic growth and create local employment opportunities, simultaneously elevating renewable energy shares in their national and local grids. This can address the host countries' fossil fuel dependency, thus achieving the dual objectives of industrial capacity transfer and sustainable decarbonization.

Second, China should strengthen multilateral coordination mechanisms and collaborative networks to build an open, inclusive global climate governance framework.

Leveraging multilateral platforms such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference and



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the WTO, China should institutionalize regular dialogues aligning trade and climate policies and deepen cooperation with strategic partners to jointly counter the politicization of tariff instruments through unilateral actions.

The year 2025 is a pivotal milestone in China-EU relations, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the EU's forerunner — the European Economic Community. As two major global economies, both parties should harness green cooperation as a strategic linchpin to steer the world toward a low-carbon, sustainable future.

Beyond accelerating mutual recognition of green technology standards, China and Europe should make joint efforts to remove market access barriers for third-party nations utilizing Chinese supply chains to enter European markets. By creating diversified market access pathways, this approach would undermine the US' coercive leverage to ensure energy transition affordability for emerging economies.

Third, China should pioneer

innovative international climate finance mechanisms to resolve the fiscal constraints on the low-carbon transition of developing countries.

A cross-border guarantee facility jointly established by Chinese and European policy banks could provide credit enhancements for developing countries' renewable energy projects.

Financial instrument innovation, coupled with support from Chinese and European markets, will not only alleviate tariff-induced capital chain strains, but also preserve policy flexibility for developing nations. By structurally blocking regression to carbon-intensive pathways through monetary channels, such mechanisms would strengthen the resilience of global climate governance.

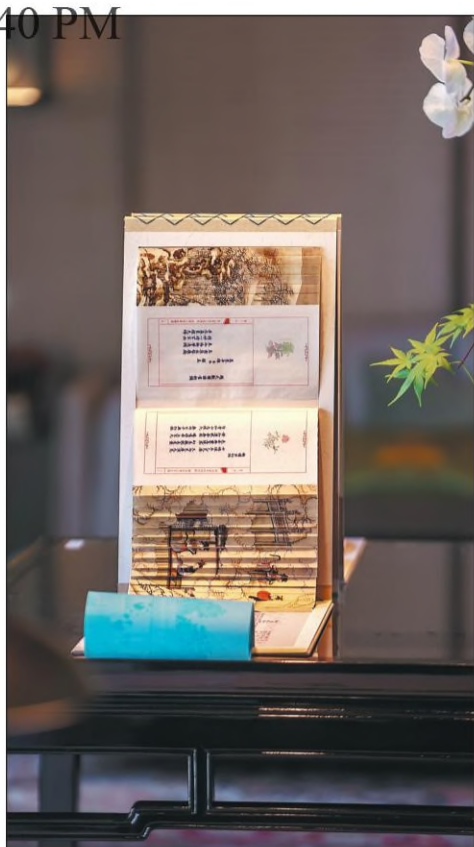
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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 02:40 PM

LIFE



Left: Zhang Xiaodong's design of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, made with Chinese xuan paper. Above: His work *Diamond Sutra in 32 Zhuan (Seal) Fonts*. Right: One of Zhang's artworks on display at the Mandarin Oriental Qianmen Hotel in Beijing.



Artworks breathe energy into serenity

Exhibition spotlights pieces that capture the essence of impermanence and peace, **Li Yingxue** reports.

Tucked away in a narrow *hutong*, or alleyways, in central Beijing, a wooden gate swings open to reveal an unexpected serenity. A spacious courtyard unfolds, anchored by two towering, lush trees. Along one side, a corridor lined with powerful artworks beckons.

Housed in the Mandarin Oriental Qianmen Hotel's quiet courtyard, *The Hidden Essence of the Oriental* exhibition runs until the end of May.

At the heart of the show are works by Beijing-based artist Zhang Xiaodong, whose delicate yet commanding pieces mirror the courtyard's tranquil atmosphere and the philosophical roots of Eastern thought.

"Who would expect to find such stillness in the middle of one of the world's busiest capitals?" Zhang reflects. "This place radiates an energy, as if time slows, or even bends. My work is shaped by that presence to channel today's emotional terrain while harmonizing with the surroundings."

Zhang's pieces are arranged like that in a slow meditation. The first, *Vital Impulse*, greets visitors with flowing lines that suggest trees and rippling water.

"Inspired by Taoist philosophy, it captures how all things — sorrow, joy, decay, renewal — move in endless cycles," the 44-year-old artist explains. "Eventually, everything returns to stillness. The idea of impermanence and peace moves me."

Vital Impulse is followed by a sequence of works, including early spring scenes and a dreamy blend of reds and pinks. Collectively, they reflect Zhang's first impressions of the courtyard and his broader meditations on time, places, and spirit.

Guan Hao, general manager of the hotel where the exhibition is held, describes the show as a deep exploration of Eastern culture's contemporary spiritual essence.

"It presents a powerful dialogue between tradition and modernity and what is hidden and revealed," Guan says. "It strikes a finely tuned balance between avant-garde creat-



Book artist Zhang Xiaodong has spent over a decade researching and practicing dragon-scale binding. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ity and local cultural grounding."

Zhang's work stands out for its visual impact and living, breathing quality.

"Zhang's pieces respond subtly to changes in humidity and temperature. They breathe with the space, constantly shifting in imperceptible ways," Guan explains. "At the same time, his art pays tribute to intangible cultural heritage, building the contemporary into a centuries-old craft."

According to Guan, Zhang's artworks evoke a poetic pursuit, a search for a personal Peach Blossom Spring, the mythical utopia of Chinese lore. "The hotel, tucked quietly within the Caochang community, mirrors that same spirit. It's a hidden urban sanctuary, tranquil and almost hermit-like."

Zhang made multiple visits to the site during the exhibition's planning, carefully studying the courtyard and its atmosphere

to ensure his works would be in sync with the space.

"In the courtyard's calmness," Guan adds, "Zhang's work reinterprets classical traditions for a contemporary audience. His pieces are not just art, but translations, renewals, and meditations on how the past breathes into the present."

What sets Zhang's artwork apart is its thematic depth and technique. Each piece incorporates dragon-scale binding, or *longlin zhuang*, a bookbinding method that flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), in which pages are layered like overlapping scales, allowing a book to unfold in an accordion-like manner.

Zhang spent years exploring and refining the technique, transforming it into his own artistic vocabulary.

In addition to his visual artworks, the exhibition showcases Zhang's books created

using the ancient dragon-scale binding technique.

Among the highlights is his award-winning piece *Diamond Sutra in 32 Zhuan (Seal) Fonts*, which earned the Gold Prize at the China Print Awards. This monumental 8-meter-long scroll consists of 217 dragon-scale pages and, when fully extended, measures an impressive 73.4 meters in length.

When fully unfolded, the scroll resembles a vibrant, undulating dragon, with layered pages that flutter and ripple like scales in the wind. As viewers read from right to left, there is an alternating rhythm of elegant calligraphy and sweeping imagery, accompanied by the rice paper's soft texture and the faint scent of ink.

The result is a multisensory reading experience that engages sight, smell, and touch, offering a whole new way of appreciating a book.

Years of reading and bookmaking have shaped Zhang's reflections on the essence of books. "To me, a book is an architectural space where poetic language resides," he explains. "Like architecture, it has spatial structure and a layered layout. Words flow through it like people fulfilling different functions within a building."

"A book is also a time-traveling spacecraft to understanding the past, imagining the future, and transcending geographic and cultural boundaries," Zhang says. "It's a black hole of possibility, capable of containing all things known and unknown. The concept of a book is infinitely inclusive."

Always an avid reader, Zhang believes the best reading experiences imitate face-to-face conversations. "The idea is to preserve as much of the original text and imagery as possible," he says, "so that reading becomes an intimate dialogue with the author, as if we're sharing afternoon tea."

This belief drew him to learning dragon-scale binding, a technique that perfectly fuses text and imagery into a seamless, flowing narrative.

Over the past decade, Zhang has created a handful of works using this method. His first dragon-scale book took two and a half years to complete; the second took four. For Zhang, each project must be unique in form and content. He refuses to repeat himself, no matter how time-consuming the process may be.

"I begin a new piece only if I've made some artistic progress. Otherwise, I'm just re-creating the past. That's a waste of time and energy."

Currently, he is working on a dragon-scale edition of *Tao Te Ching*, which has already taken six years. Zhang estimates it will take two more years to finish. "That may not even be my most time-consuming work," he notes. "The next one could take longer."

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By XING WEN
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Kids showcase creativity on the catwalk

The recently concluded 2025 Puyuan Fashion Week featured the typical straight-faced, statuesque models strutting down runways in haute couture to loud, pulsating beats, while immaculately styled celebrities, trendsetters and designers observed from the sidelines.

Held annually at the Puyuan Fashion Resort in Tongxiang in East China's Zhejiang province, the event transforms ordinary corridors, alleyways and squares into edgy catwalks for renowned fashion brands.

However, in stark contrast to the mainstream spectacle, a group of local primary school students staged a show. For over a month, they designed and reimaged traditional Chinese garments like *hanfu* and *qipao*, then took to the runway to model their designs.

This showcase skipped flashy stage designs and instead had handmade decorative installations of knitted yarn and tulle, co-crafted by parents and children in the audience.

Streams of bubbles flew from bubble machines, injecting playful whimsy into the fashion week's youthful chic.

The group of students from Maodun Experimental Primary School in Tongxiang participated in this fashion design program under the guidance of Beijing-based fashion designer Wang Qian.

Over the past month, students were encouraged to unleash their creativity on basic traditional garments, gradually bringing their imagined designs to life during art and craft classes. Most of the participants



Young students from Maodun Experimental Primary School in Puyuan town, Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, are encouraged to unleash their creativity on basic traditional garments and showcase their designs themselves on the runway of this year's Puyuan Fashion Week on Sunday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

were third- to fifth-graders.

The children made bold attempts, such as reinventing traditional *qipao* fabrics by incorporating wool knitwear elements or decorating *hanfu* dresses with rainbow-colored plush toys and cotton-made clouds.

"This program broke the conventional 'adult-dominated' framework of traditional fashion shows by giving full creative control to children," Wang explains. "This child-centered approach not only sparked their interest in clothing design but also cultivated their creativity, hands-on skills, and awareness in

aesthetics through practical experience.

"Their concentration and enthusiasm throughout the program exceeded my expectations," she adds. "Some kids played around with different yarns and sheer fabrics until they got that perfect 'flowing like clouds' Chinese style, while others made cool eco clothing from recycled stuff."

Chu Yumeng, a 10-year-old participant, showcased a white and pale blue ensemble featuring intricate dragon designs, with seashell-crafted scales adorning the fabric and

paired with matching scale-shaped hair accessories.

The look drew inspiration from Ao Run, her favorite character in the blockbuster Chinese animated film *Ne Zha*. "It took weeks to bring the costume to life, exactly how I imagined," says Yumeng, her eyes lighting up.

"Seeing it finally come together for this showcase was my happiest moment."

Ke Libin, Yumeng's mother and clothing boutique owner in Tongxiang, expressed joy at seeing her daughter showcase self-de-

signed, handcrafted garments at Puyuan Fashion Week.

"This runway experience really boosted her confidence," Ke observes.

"I've noticed her becoming more outgoing and comfortable expressing herself in public."

The program reflects Puyuan's initiative to spark children's interest in fashion and nurture future design talent.

This year, the fashion week also launched a program to scout young designers worldwide to provide them with an incubation platform for their creativity. It also hosted a model competition to cultivate supermodels with both market potential and artistic expression for the fashion industry.

Puyuan, one of China's largest woolen knitwear production and distribution hubs, has driven industrial upgrades and global fashion integration in recent years, with its annual fashion week emerging as a cornerstone of this transformation.

The ancient Jiangnan (south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) water town now blends traditional charm with contemporary flair. Walking along its flagstone streets, visitors encounter boutiques, textile exhibits, and artisan workshops with carnival performances, live music events and fashion trade shows.

The week long event attracts designers, industry leaders and travelers alike, transforming Puyuan into a dynamic open-air showcase of fashion innovation.



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LIFE



A group photo at an event at Sisyph Books in Beijing in late March during which Choi Eun-young (center) had a conversation with professor Zhang Li (front left) from Beijing Normal University. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Recognizing the reality of women

South Korean writer's books find resonance with readers inside and outside her home country, **Yang Yang** reports.

When tickets for South Korean writer Choi Eun-young's book signing and meet-and-greet event in the Langyuan Vintage cultural and art zone in late March were released online, they immediately sold out.

In 2023, the Chinese translation of her novel *Bright Night* topped the foreign literature list on review platform Douban. With a rating of nine out of 10, it entered the top 10 list of the most popular feminist books of all time on the platform, alongside Italian writer Elena Ferrante's *The Story of the Lost Child*, French Nobel Prize laureate Annie Ernaux's *A Woman's Story*, and Canadian Writer Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*.

Bright Night follows 32-year-old Ji-yeon as she moves to the quiet coastal city of Heeryong, seeking refuge from the unresolved chapters of her life. There, a chance encounter reunites her with her long-estranged grandmother after two decades of separation. Through fragmented memories and whispered family histories — stories of her grandmother's resilience and her mother's silent struggles — Ji-yeon begins to untangle the generational threads that have shaped her identity.

The novel weaves a four-generation saga of women, projecting their intertwined lives, quiet defiance, and emotional odysseys against the backdrop of South Korea's tumultuous modern history, as the country rose from the shadows of Japanese occupation through the fractures of rapid industrialization.

Among more than 22,000 comments posted by Chinese readers about *Bright Night*, many say that they deeply resonated with the female characters.

Zhang Li, professor of Chinese language and literature at Beijing Normal University, describes the book as "both warm and powerful".

"The writer doesn't just capture the emotional landscape of Korean women — she articulates what can



Left: Choi Eun-young's book-signing session at the Beijing reader meeting event at Sisyph Books. Right: In 2023, Choi Eun-young's short story collection *Someone Harmless to Me*, and her debut novel *Bright Night*, were published and well-received in China.

not be cleared stated, giving form to the deeply felt but rarely voiced truths that resonate profoundly with us as Chinese women," she says.

Explaining why the book is so well-received in China, Choi says: "Regardless of cultural background or location, humans all share some universal emotions. Starting from birth, each person carries their own pain, even those that appear to lead relatively easy lives. Therefore, no matter what kind of story is being told, it will touch upon the pain in a reader's heart, which is what defines a good story."

"On the other hand, as someone who is part of the East Asian cultural circle, some of our emotions and values are influenced by Confucian culture. Therefore, I guess readers from the East Asian region may have a deeper understanding of my stories compared to those from other cultural background," she says.

So far, three of Choi's books have been published in the Chinese mainland, including a short story collection *Someone Harmless to Me*, and *Bright Night*, both of which were published by Beijing Xiron Culture

Group. Another short story collection *A Very Faint Light Though* is going to be published later this year, also by Xiron.

Born in Gwangmyeong in Gyeonggi-do in 1984, Choi started writing fiction in senior middle school, but says she did not have the courage to be a professional writer until she was almost 30, when the desire to write finally overcame her fear of writing.

"Since I was young, I have often felt empty inside, but once I start writing, I feel calm and a real sense of being alive," she says.

Her novella *Shoko's Smile* started her writing career in 2013.

The story takes place during the era when Japanese culture was just beginning to spread to South Korea. A Japanese high school girl student named Shoko comes to South Korea and stays at a friend's house for a week, leading to incidents. Later, the two become pen pals. The theme of this novel revolves around the unstable period between adolescence and the early 20s, and the harsh reality of being unable to establish oneself in society in one's late 20s.

Choi then published a short story collection also titled *Shoko's Smile: Stories*.

In 2018, she published a second short story collection, *Someone Harmless to Me*, which won seven literary awards in South Korea. The eight short stories shine a light on people pushed to society's edges: the wife of an unjustly condemned prisoner, a student enduring domestic violence, families of shipwreck victims, and friends separated by war.

Quietly broken yet harmless, these people remain trapped in sorrow. Their hearts bear scars that cannot be erased or mended — wounds that shape their fragile humanity. Yet often, those who have harmed them are no different: ordinary people, who are just as vulnerable.

"Under what circumstances do people get hurt? In what kind of societal structures do they experience harm? How do different mindsets and personalities lead to conflict and pain? I have a strong interest in these questions. Describing the instantaneous changes in a person's inner world with delicate, sensitive, and accurate language is where my

interest lies," the author says.

In 2017, Choi visited Cuba. One day, while she was sitting, lost in thought, the image of her maternal uncle leaving his sick mother for Kaesong swam before her eyes, leading to the writing of her debut full-length novel *Bright Night*, which was published in 2021.

Initially, she didn't intend to write a novel that spans four generations, but inspired by her own storytelling grandmother, she began the novel from the viewpoint of a grandmother, who shares tales about her own mother and life.

As she wrote the novel, Choi began to think that the grandmother character was probably telling her stories to someone, and came up with the idea of the listener being her granddaughter, Ji-yeon. The granddaughter then became the central character in the novel, alongside her mother, the daughter of the storytelling grandmother.

In many of Choi's short stories as well as her novel, the mother-daughter relationship stands out as one of the most frequent topics.

"(That is) because the relationship

between myself and my mother is one of the issues that I have been wanting to resolve," she says, adding, "among all the relationships, the mother-daughter relationship is the most complex."

"It naturally became a topic in my writing because fiction seeks to portray the complexity and diversity of human beings."

Friendship between women is another important topic.

When she was young, Choi says she often heard sayings like, "Women don't understand true friendship"; "Relationships between women are too cunning"; "True friendship only exists between men"; and "A woman's biggest enemy is another woman."

"However, as I truly experienced life, I found that this was not the case. Nobody wants to help women more than other women. This made me start to ponder why there are so many ideas in society disdainful of women," she says.

"As a novelist, we must authentically portray reality, so I hope to truthfully depict through novels that genuine friendship exists between women, as well as mutual love."

Many readers feel a sense of healing from the love and friendship between the female characters in the novel.

Commenting on Douban, Chinese reader "Qijiu" writes: "When I read similar books about women before, I would always cry because of the women's hardships, thinking about how difficult it is to be a woman. Although this book also talks about hardships, every time I cry, it is due to the love conveyed within it. This love transcends the book, as if healing the little rebellious me, the present me."

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Belgian visitors get a taste of Tujia tradition

CHONGQING — Greeted with lively folk songs and homemade rice wine by enthusiastic local residents dressed in colorful traditional attire, 19 Belgian professors and students were recently treated to an introduction to the ethnic culture of the Tujia people of Chongqing.

"People and nature as well as the cultural environment here are fascinating," says Francois Serneels, an agronomist who led the tour group.

Serneels first visited China in 1999. About 15 years ago he traveled to Hewan, a village located in the mountainous Youyang Tujia and Miao autonomous county, and says he has since returned about five times.

Having witnessed the incredible changes that have taken place in this Tujia village over the years, Serneels says that what truly inspires him is

how both the government and local residents are working to preserve their traditions. "That's why I bring students here."

During their visit, the students and professors hiked in the misty hills to appreciate the village's beauty, and experienced agrarian tradition by guiding oxen as they plowed fields, gaining hands-on farming experience while engaging in an in-depth cultural exchange.

Beyond the picturesque scenery, the techniques used to build stilted Tujia buildings particularly impressed the visitors. The village is home to 245 such stilted structures and to a museum dedicated to Tujia architecture.

Bai Kaigui, 76, is a master builder of this style of architecture. He demonstrated the traditional mortise-

and-tenon building technique.

"This method minimizes ground contact, improving moisture resistance, preventing wood rot, and improving drainage and ventilation — all of which are crucial to preserving wooden structures in damp conditions," Bai explains, saying that these features stem from the region's geography and climate.

"Seeing this way of nail-free joints to build houses is incredible," says student Constantin Goffard, who thinks that this tradition must be preserved for its architectural value and the ancient engineering knowledge behind it.

Maria Miltcheva, a professor at Belgium's Haute Ecole Provinciale de Hainaut-Condorcet who also visited Hewan village in 2012, remembers that during her first

trip, many houses were old or abandoned, and residents had just begun restoration work thanks to government subsidies.

"I was really surprised that in 13 years, such great progress has been made and people now live better," she says.

Serneels also highlights the increasing agricultural cooperation between China and Belgium, particularly in the areas of potato disease prevention and sustainable yield improvement.

He made note of China's remarkable progress in agricultural digitalization, specifically praising drone technology for precision sowing with advanced route positioning to ensure uniform seed distribution, which has revolutionized planting quality and efficiency. The drones also have real-



A bird's-eye view of tourists visiting Youzhou ancient town in the Youyang Tujia and Miao autonomous county, Chongqing. QIU HONGBIN / XINHUA

time field monitoring capabilities, reporting crop data and early signs of pests or diseases.

Serneels expresses his hope that more young Europeans will visit Chi-

na to engage in immersive dialogue and discover the country's stories firsthand.

CULTURE

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Above left: International tourists visit Palace Museum, a large national museum complex housed in the Forbidden City in central Beijing on April 4. PHOTOS BY WANG XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Above right: Tourists from around the world visit the Temple of Heaven, a complex of imperial buildings situated in the southeastern part of central Beijing, on April 5.

Seeing China to understand it

'China Travel' wave sweeping the globe stokes demand for tour guides and translators, **Hou Chenchen** reports.

Bidding farewell at the airport to her group of tourists, 34-year-old Hou Suyun could barely contain her emotions. An elderly couple from the United States noticed her mood swing and pulled her in for a group photo. In the picture, all three smiled, their eyes glistening with tears.

"At that final moment, we closed the distance between us," she says. "Even if we never meet again, I will always remember that moment."

From Shanghai to Shenzhen, Hou accompanied her tourists during a ten-day cruise journey, guiding them to discover the charm of East China's coastal cities. Hou left her job in data analysis last year, deciding to pursue a new career path as a local guide.

In 2024, as China further optimized its visa-free transit policies, a wave of "China Travel" swept across the globe. The National Immigration Administration of China issued 2.597 million visa permits to foreigners, marking a 52.3-percent increase year-on-year, while visa-free entries reached 20.115 million, surging by 112.3 percent compared to the previous year.

With this surge came a growing demand for foreign-language tour guides and translators to cater to the curiosity of these international travelers.

In 2024, approximately 310,000 people in China applied for the tour guide qualification certificate, a notable increase from the previous year's 200,000, according to China Central Television.

A clear trend is the rise in applicants with higher education and foreign language backgrounds, according to Travel Daily, a Chinese media outlet specializing in tourism. For instance, Fujian province in East China recorded 531 applicants for foreign language tour guide qualification certificate tests in 2024, a surge of over 180 percent compared to 2023.

"Under such circumstances, many fresh faces have joined the tour guide industry," Hou says. As a travel enthusiast who has always loved interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, she sources clients through social media and intermediary services, guiding English-speaking tourists around Shanghai and its surrounding areas.

Zhao Wenyu, 22, who majored in Spanish and international business, is based in Beijing. She spends her free time working as a part-time tour guide for visitors from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Years of language study and an exchange program in Mexico helped her quickly adapt to the rhythm of tour guiding.

Likewise, Chongqing-based 28-year-old Kang He, with two years of experience in the field, welcomes English-speaking tourists in this Southwest China's city. Kang obtained an official Chinese tour guide license before formally

receiving clients, thus he could connect with tour groups from around the world through major travel agencies.

Bridging people

Johanna St, 25, an insights analyst based in Germany, visited Shanghai in December with her guide, Hou, exploring some of the city's popular tourist spots, including Yu Garden and the Bund. However, as she mentioned, what she appreciated most was experiencing the authentic side of Shanghai.

"I loved spending time at local cafes and restaurants, exploring markets, and even playing table tennis. These activities gave me a more authentic feel for the city," she says, adding that stepping beyond the typical tourist experience allowed her to view China from a more local perspective, which was exactly what she had hoped for.

As a vegetarian, Johanna found it challenging to navigate local cuisine, but her guide introduced her to a variety of vegetarian-friendly dishes and ensured she always had great options.

"Random food combinations, like Oreos on savory pizza and cheese in tea, really stood out for me ... She (Hou) even taught me how to cook traditional dishes, so I could bring a taste of China back home to my family," she says.

Johanna says she noticed a growing trend of content promoting China as a travel destination. "This kind of content is increasing awareness of China's beauty and encouraging more people to visit. I believe the relaxed visa policies are playing a key role in boosting tourism interest."

"Most people are shocked and amazed when they arrive in Shanghai, feeling that the city appears even more developed than some places in the United States," Hou says.

Like Johanna, most of Hou's clients come from Europe or the US. Their main impressions of Shanghai were its technology, prosperity, cleanliness, safety, and bustling crowds.

In Beijing, tour guide Zhao has hosted family tour groups and professionals in the foreign trade industry. "Around major events like the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair), many foreign exhibitors come to explore the city as well," she says.

Mexican tourists are particularly fascinated by the high-tech aspects of daily life in China, such as mobile payments. "In Mexico, offline payments are still the norm, and less than 10 percent of the population uses bank cards," she explained. "They find our newer technologies like palm-print payments and facial recognition payments incredibly novel and almost unimaginable."

Cosmopolitan metropolises like Shanghai and Beijing are often referred to by international tour-

“
If, by the end of our time together,
our interactions help them understand the
real China, that's the greatest reward for me.”

Hou Suyun, Shanghai-based tour guide



From top: Tour guides collect visitors from South Korea at Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal in Shanghai on Jan 16; Tourists step off a cruise ship in Shanghai and begin a colorful journey on April 7; An international tourist takes a selfie during a visit to Ciqikou, an ancient town in Chongqing on March 19. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ists as the "beginner's village" of China travel. However, for some, exploring beyond these major cities presents more challenging choices. Chongqing, internationally renowned on social media as a "cyberpunk city," also has a softer, more serene side.

"Everyone comes to Chongqing for its three-dimensional night views, but you can also climb Nanshan Mountain (Chongqing South Mountain) to overlook the Jialing River or take a half-hour high-speed train ride to experience the surrounding nature," Kang says. "What makes Chongqing most appealing is the seamless blend of nature and urban life."

However, stereotypes and cultural differences still persist. For instance, Zhao's clients are puzzled by the Chinese habit of eating pig's trotters, while Kang's tourists struggle to adapt to the spiciness of Chongqing's cuisine. In such situations, the explanations and adaptability of tour guides become crucial.

"Some visitors arrive with stereotypes, like the idea that Chinese people eat dog or cat meat, but after seeing things for themselves, they realize that's not the case for everyone," Zhao says.

"Foreigners are often curious about things we take for granted ... I need to shift perspectives to explain the deeper reasons behind these phenomena," Hou says.

When Hou's cruise passed by Xiamen, a city in East China's Fujian province, they took a ferry to visit Gulangyu Island. On the return trip, the last ferry was extremely crowded, with some tourists even being pushed onto the boat.

"At first, international tourists were a bit upset, thinking these people were being rude. I encouraged them to put themselves in the locals' shoes — if you were one of them, working on the island every day and this was the last ferry home to meet families, you'd also push your way on," Hou says.

"China is a country with a large population, and when you experience life as a local, you'll develop more empathy for how Chinese people live," she says.

Mirroring self

In this cross-cultural exchange woven through travel, it is not just foreign visitors to China who are constantly updating their perceptions. Through the lens of these "Western mirrors," these young cultural ambassadors are also re-examining their own culture and reflecting on their connection to the world.

What left the deepest impression on Kang was a large family tour group from the Philippines. The grandfather was an overseas Chinese who had moved to the Philippines in the 1980s, while his high school-aged granddaughter spoke fluent Chinese, thanks to her grandfather sending her to an

international school in Fujian.

"Many overseas Chinese or ethnic Chinese families want to bring their children to see China. Their lifestyle habits are quite similar to ours, and they're very eager to learn about Chinese culture," Kang says.

"They often ask me enthusiastically about the stories behind certain places. There's a growing appreciation for Chinese culture, and China's image is becoming increasingly positive."

Hou says that being a tour guide has given her a continuous opportunity to learn about what China is and what Chinese culture represents.

To better introduce the temples they visit during tours, she has delved into the study of ancient Chinese religious culture and philosophical thought, thoroughly enjoying the process of acquiring new knowledge.

Having studied abroad, Zhao is already very familiar with Mexican culture, yet her interactions with Mexican tourists still often touch her deeply.

"I once shared a room with a Mexican girl around my age. We talked late into the night," Zhao recalls. "I shared the pressures and challenges in my life, and she comforted me with such sincerity. It's truly precious to meet a friend from another country in your own homeland and connect on such a deep level."

As a college student, Zhao often feels the anxiety of academic and job pressures, but interacting with tourists from Mexico and other Latin American countries always brings her a sense of healing through their outlook on life.

"Vida la Vida' (Long live life) — I really love this famous Spanish saying and the philosophy of life it conveys," she says.

During the 10-day cruise, Hou also made many friends. "Many guests left positive reviews or their contact information, telling me to visit them if I ever come to the US. It was incredibly touching, especially as someone new to the industry," she says.

In February, Hou passed the exam for China's foreign-language tour guide certification and is now considering becoming a full-time guide.

Zhao, on the other hand, found career inspiration through her guiding experiences. In the future, she hopes to work in cross-border trade between China and Latin America.

"From applying for visas and flying here to navigating unfamiliar apps, it's not easy for these foreign tourists to visit China," Hou says.

"If, by the end of our time together, our interactions help them understand the real China, that's the greatest reward for me."

Gao Yuxi contributed to this story.

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Rebuilding stronger

Quake-hit Myanmar seeks aid, builds capacity for future threat
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Master craftsman keeps art alive through sculpting
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Brewing partnership

Major domestic coffee chains savoring Brazil's finest beans
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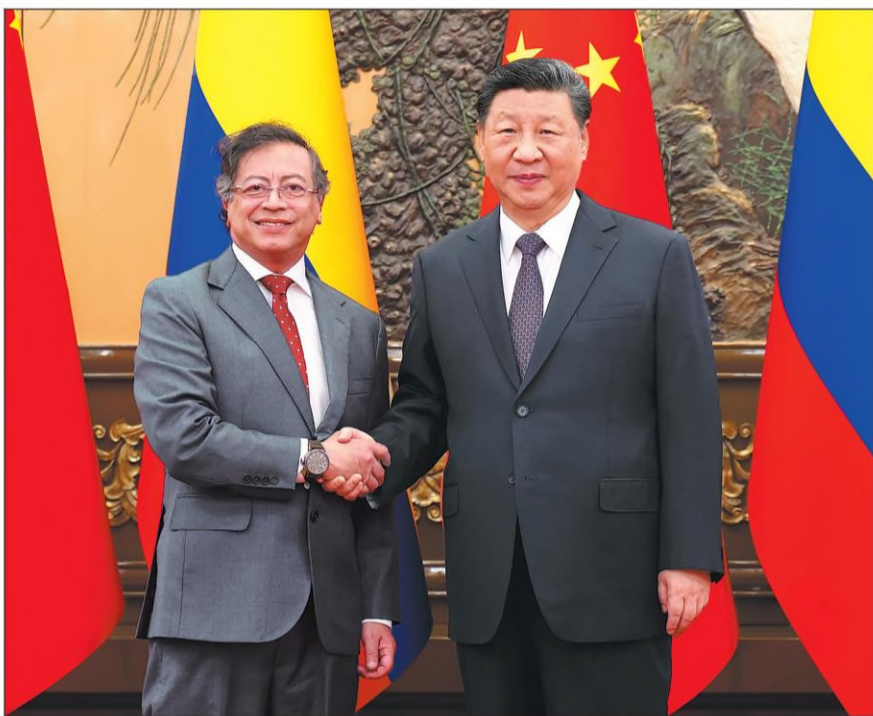
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025

Xi: Advance building of Belt and Road

President stresses importance of bilateral ties as he meets with leaders of two Latin American countries



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Wednesday during their meeting in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Chilean President Gabriel Boric on Wednesday during their meeting in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

China and Colombia sign cooperation agreement on BRI

By CAO DESHENG
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China and Colombia signed on Wednesday a cooperation plan on jointly building the Belt and Road, demonstrating the two countries' commitment to strengthening their partnership amid the turbulent international landscape.

President Xi Jinping and Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who is in China for the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum, witnessed the signing of the document after their meeting in Beijing.

During the meeting, Xi told Petro that the two countries should take Colombia's formal accession to the Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity to upgrade bilateral cooperation.

China is willing to import more high-quality products from Colombia, and supports Chinese companies to invest in the South American country and participate in its infrastructure construction, Xi said.

Both sides can further expand

cooperation in emerging areas such as wind energy, new energy vehicles, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, and jointly achieve a green and low-carbon transformation, he said.

He urged both sides to ensure the success of the celebrations marking the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations, strengthen cooperation in education, culture, tourism and other fields, enhance people-to-people exchanges and consolidate the public opinion foundation for friendly ties between the two countries.

Colombia is the CELAC rotating chair this year. The fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum was held in Beijing on Tuesday.

Observers said that Petro's visit to China is not only an opportunity to deepen bilateral relations, but also an important step toward promoting China-LAC cooperation.

Xi said that China-LAC cooperation is an important part of South-South cooperation, aligns with the global development and historical trend, and serves the common interests of China and LAC countries.

The successful convening of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum sends a positive signal to the world for seeking shared development and revitalization, he said.

China is willing to work together with LAC countries, including Colombia, to deepen and solidify the efforts to promote the building of the China-LAC community with a shared future to deliver greater benefits to the peoples of both regions, Xi added.

Petro said Colombia looks forward to deepening its relations with China. He underlined the need for both countries to enhance political mutual trust and strengthen mutual support.

In the current complex and volatile international landscape, the practices of some countries to pursue unilateral gains are not conducive to the world, and all countries should stand together to respond, Petro said.

Colombia is willing to closely cooperate with China to defend international fairness and justice, and safeguard the common interests of developing countries, he added.

Beijing, Santiago urged to create a model of common development

By CAO DESHENG

President Xi Jinping has called on China and Chile to work together to create a model of common development between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries, set a stellar example of South-South cooperation, and jointly promote the cause of peace and progress for humanity.

Xi made the remarks on Wednesday during a meeting with Chilean President Gabriel Boric, who is in Beijing for the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum.

Xi hailed the development of bilateral ties, and said that China is willing to work with Chile to consolidate political mutual trust, firmly support each other on issues concerning their core interests and major concerns, and safeguard each other's sovereignty, security and development interests.

He called on the two countries to implement the Belt and Road cooperation plan, deepen cooperation on agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, industrial

investment, infrastructure and green minerals, and cultivate new growth drivers in the fields of astronomy, polar regions, artificial intelligence, biomedicine and the digital economy.

China supports more Chinese enterprises in investing and doing business in Chile and welcomes more high-quality Chilean products to enter the Chinese market, he said.

Saying that the international situation is turbulent and complex, with waves of unilateralism and protectionism causing serious disruption to the international economic and trade order, Xi urged China and Chile, which he described as staunch defenders of multilateralism and free trade, to enhance multilateral cooperation to safeguard the common interests of the countries of the Global South.

Boric said that China has become Chile's most important trading partner, and bilateral cooperation has benefited the two peoples.

Chile will firmly adhere to the one-China principle, and is ready to expand cooperation with China on trade, investment and artificial intelligence, jointly advance high-

quality Belt and Road cooperation, and strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges, he said.

All countries should adhere to free trade, mutual benefit and win-win results, Boric said, adding that trade should not only serve the private interests of one individual country and waging a trade war leads nowhere.

Chile is willing to work with China to firmly safeguard multilateralism and the authority of the United Nations, insist on resolving differences through dialogue, and jointly uphold international fairness and justice, he said.

This is Boric's second visit to China since he became Chilean president in March 2022, with the previous one taking place in October 2023. During the latest visit to China, the two countries signed a number of cooperation documents in fields such as the economy, publishing, inspection and quarantine, media and think tanks.

Inside

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Arab states key to defending trade order

The tariffs imposed on China and other countries by the United States have been impeding the comprehensive growth of the global economy and disrupting the normal international trade order. Most countries, including the Arab nations, support a multilateral trading system with clear rules and advocate the principles of free trade that serve the interests of all — a stance championed by China.

Indeed, China's image has solidified in international public opinion as a defender of free trade and the interests of developing countries amid global turbulence.

China, through its development achievements, has proven that it is a reliable partner for achieving prosperity and building a community with a shared future for mankind through cooperation, upholding the values of peace, dialogue, develop-

WORLD WATCH By Ahmed Abdellah Faris

ment and mutual benefit. Guided by President Xi Jinping's philosophy that "a small boat and a lone sail cannot withstand the rough waves, and only by working together in the same boat can people sail steadily and far", China has become the largest trading partner for more than 150 countries and has 23 free trade agreements with 30 nations.

Gains from cooperation

Bolstering China's stance is not merely a fleeting political reaction but a smart and farsighted strategic choice that entails numerous economic and political benefits for the supporting nations. The strategic

cooperation model between the Arab states and China, which predates the recent crisis by many years, aims to bolster multipolarity in the global system by diversifying partnerships and moving away from reliance on the United States. This Arab support has benefited them in achieving economic independence and reducing overall dependence on the West.

The recent crisis of customs tariffs, which China has turned from a challenge into an opportunity for developing countries, has amplified these benefits. These have enabled Egypt and other Arab states through strategic cooperation with China and diversification of partners, to transform into global economic hubs and capitalize on the geopolitical and economic shifts the world is witnessing.

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Vol.7 - No. 1579
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FLOWER INDUSTRY PIONEERS PROFIT FROM FIELDS OF DREAMS

Tourist photo ops, livestreams of beautiful bouquets, create buzz about Zhejiang 'paradise'

By YANG FEIYUE
yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

In-depth

In a quiet corner of Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, a former overgrown plot has been transformed into a natural paradise lush, manicured and pulsating with color under the sun.

On weekends and holidays, visitors from across the country, especially neighboring Shanghai and Jiangsu province, trek to the flower farm in Xingfu village, Changan town, Haining, to admire thousands of plants and blooms that give them

memorable moments on social media platforms.

"What sets us apart is not just biodiversity but a philosophy of ecological harmony," said Xu Zhufeng, founder of the Plant Library.

Xu chose Plant Library as the name because the farm is home to a wide variety of species.

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PAGE TWO

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“Our goal is to create an environment where plants can grow in harmony with one another, turning the Plant Library into a miniature version of nature,” Xu, in his 30s, explained.

Instead of placing plants in neat rows, Xu puts them in the ground following natural patterns — shade-loving plants in cooler areas, sun-seeking ones in open fields.

This approach has earned the site a faithful following.

“Our loyal customers, especially those in commercial photography, tell us it’s unlike anywhere else. Here, they find scenery that feels untouched, unexpected,” Xu explained.

The thriving business is part of prospering flower plantations across Changan, which have become a pillar industry that has significantly raised residents’ income and rejuvenated the town.

Budding star

Born and raised in Haining, Xu didn’t begin his career looking after flowers in fields. After finishing horticulture studies, he spent about five years as a landscape designer at a major design institute in the provincial capital Hangzhou, focusing on garden and park projects.

“I’ve always believed that even the most ordinary blade of grass can be beautiful, and it’s that most people don’t look closely enough,” he said.

In 2014, his career took a sharp turn. “I made a bouquet for a friend, and posted it on social media, and suddenly people started asking to buy flowers from me,” he recalled.

He tentatively expanded his flower-arranging hobby and sold his creations on a shop on e-commerce platform Taobao that he worked for while being a student. His side business quickly became very lucrative. “One day’s sales exceeded my monthly salary. That’s when I realized this isn’t just a sideline but a real business,” Xu said.

The success prompted him to leave his stable job and commit to the online flower shop, which remains in operation today.

While business was steady, Xu was frustrated by the limited variety of flowers available on the market.

“Back then, the mainstream flowers were just roses, lilies, and carnations. I thought why can’t we grow more ourselves?”

He explored the rural outskirts of Haining, and in 2015 found 13 mu (0.87 hectares) of unused land in Chang’an, a township area known for flower cultivation.

“It was all weeds, no trees — just an empty plot,” he recalled. “But the surroundings were like Eden. There was a forest-like serenity, and I felt this could become something special.”

Despite being a complete newcomer to commercial agriculture, Xu forged ahead. “I didn’t know the first thing about farming,” he laughed. “I just brought seeds to the local farmers and asked them to plant them.”

“Every day brought new challenges. Communicating with farmers is completely different from managing employees. You need emotional intelligence — sometimes even flattery. It’s not about logic; it’s about relationships,” he said.

Over the years, the plot has evolved into a vibrant ecosystem. Although it was initially intended to supply Xu’s shop, the farm started attracting photographers and curious flower lovers. Eventually, he embraced the shift in the business model.

“People came to check it out so often, I figured why not turn it into a destination?” he said.

The Plant Library was transformed into a tourism destination, hosting seasonal flower design classes, photo shoots, and workshops with renowned florists.

During spring and autumn when the facility is in full swing, daily visitors number breaks 400, he said.

Radiating success

About 30-minute drive away from Xu’s place, Lou Yongli is preparing to host her popular livestream in Tianming village.

Inside a greenhouse, Lou, in her 30s, looks in a mirror, and carefully applies eyeliner. At 3 pm, her Douyin livestream account goes live and within minutes, her virtual audience begins to grow.

The livestream has turned Lou into a local celebrity and made her flower business, Yongli Gardening, a thriving enterprise with annual sales exceeding 1 million yuan (\$137,200).

“Family, the link is up! Our No 1 bestseller today: multi-bloom lilies! Grab them



Tourists flock to the 2025 World Garden Show in Haining, Zhejiang province, in April. The event had a total exhibition area of 500,000 square meters. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

FLOWERS: CULTIVATING BEAUTY AND PROSPERITY

now for a surprise deal!” she entreats her followers.

Lou beams as she stands framed by a ring of light in a sea of freshly cut flowers. Viewers’ comments begin to roll in.

With practiced ease, Lou lifts one bouquet after another to the camera, and confidently gives expert explanations of the different varieties, and care instructions.

She also makes a point of answering questions in the comments area, which illustrates her professional approach to the job.

Before entering the flower business four years ago, Lou ran a clothing store. When the pandemic disrupted offline retail, she accepted an invitation from village officials to take over a few plots of land and try selling flowers online.

The idea was novel but risky, she thought. “Livestreaming may seem easy to get into, but turning it into a sustainable business isn’t simple,” Lou reflected.

In addition to developing her expertise on flowers, she quickly realized that customers weren’t just purchasing flowers, but also buying into concepts of beauty and ambience.

That’s why Lou invested in polishing her own image. “If the flowers must be pretty, then the person selling them should be too,” she reasoned.

Lou’s livestreams regularly bring in large audiences and solid sales, but she isn’t stopping there.

To expand beyond Douyin, Lou regularly takes photos of her flowers and shares them on WeChat Moments. Customers who have befriended her spot something they like, screenshot it and message her directly to order.

Over time, she has cultivated a loyal customer base and transformed her venture into one of the leading horticulture businesses in Tianming, which is home to more than 100 flower-farming households.

The village sells over two million pots of flowers annually, with a combined output worth nearly 100 million yuan.

Photo opportunities

A few minutes’ drive away, Li Zhengping’s garden resembles a French impressionist’s canvas. Since the arrival of spring, dozens of multicolored blossoms have emerged, drawing visitors from far and wide to take pictures and trim petals.

“This garden has served both as a showcase of our products and an experimental field,” said Li, explaining the original reason for establishing the garden, which has



Left: A tourist takes a selfie at the Plant Library, a flower farm in Haining. YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY Right: Xu Zhufeng, founder of the Plant Library works at his farm. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



“Since 2019, with the explosion of online videos, and especially during the 2020 homebound economy, our sales have skyrocketed. The demand for land and labor grew with it.”

Li Zhengping, entrepreneur

grown to become a favorite spot for flower lovers.

“Our facility stretches 80 meters. When it bloomed in recent weeks, it was like a dream,” he said. “People came all the way from Hangzhou and Shanghai just to take pictures. It makes them happy,” he observed.

After they post their photos online, more admirers arrive. “This is the best promotion, better than what we promote on our own initiative,” Li said, adding the online interest has also greatly boosted flower sales.

A horticulture major, Li moved to Haining in 2010. He settled in Tianming village in 2016, drawn by what he saw as fertile ground for plants and business possibilities.

“This place had a strong foundation for the industry,” he said. “The flower planting area was already large, facilities were good, and young people were willing to stay and work. That meant there was potential to gather momentum.”

Li began modestly, renting just 6 mu of land from local farmers. “Back then, funds

were limited, and I had no sales channels,” he admitted.

Since his arrival, Tianming village has come a long way from its earlier days when cut flowers were sold for weddings and ceremonies. Under Li’s efforts, it is now known for its potted hydrangeas, lilies, and garden greens — products better suited for online orders and nationwide delivery.

“We designed it this way,” Li said. “Potted plants survive shipping better. And with the land transferred from local villagers, even the elderly have found stable work in nearby greenhouses,” he added.

“Since 2019, with the explosion of online videos, and especially during the 2020 homebound economy, our sales have skyrocketed. We surpassed 80 million yuan in total sales,” he said. “The demand for land and labor grew with it.”

Today, his company Three Lazy Ants is a major rural employer and a showcase for innovation.

“We created a packaging workshop with

room for 60 to 70 workers, mostly elderly residents or low-income villagers,” Li said.

Each of them earns 3,000 to 5,000 yuan per month.

Collective strength

Compared with other major flower production areas, such as Southwest China’s Yunnan province, the collective strength of the floral business in Haining plays an important role in the success of his own business, Li said.

While Yunnan has better natural conditions for flower plantations, Li believes Haining has advantages in the scale of the industry and its location. He has taken on the role of deputy secretary of the village’s flower industry, and also helped lift the living standards of neighboring growers.

Li’s enterprise, along with several other flower plantations, accounts for 80 percent of the flower trade in Tianming.

“He doesn’t just sell his own flowers,” said Gao Chenchen, an official with Tianming village. “If nearby farmers can’t find enough market channels for their lilies or tulips, Li brings them into his livestreams to help them sell.”

Li’s work has been recognized by the village. He is a provincial youth entrepreneurship mentor, and his company was named a Zhejiang provincial-level agricultural innovation base in December.

What makes his efforts resonant within the community is how deeply he has rooted his ambition in collective growth. “There’s beauty in flowers,” Li said, “but there’s greater beauty in watching a community grow with them.”

China is the world’s largest producer of flowers. According to data from the China Flower Association, the country currently has nearly 220,000 seedling and flower enterprises, with an annual output value exceeding 520 billion yuan.

The potential has drawn in a rising number of young people who are breathing new life into the industry.

Despite the rising popularity of his farm, Xu remains modest about the “internet celebrity farm” label that has gone viral on social media.

“I don’t see it that way. For me, the charm lies in the fact that it’s a year-round, continuous process,” he said.

Xu said in the future he will focus on sustainability of land, business, and take a creative approach.

“Each season brings a need for new maintenance and new inspiration, which I see as a beautiful cycle. It never ends, and that’s the point,” he said.



Left: A visitor sketches the garden of Three Lazy Ants in Haining. YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY



Middle: Enthusiasts take photos and view flowers during the 2025 World Garden Show in Haining in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: A grower hosts livestreaming sales of her flowers at a planting base in Qingdao, Shandong province. LIANG XIAOPENG / XINHUA

TOP NEWS

Firms pivot to home market amid hurdles

Local companies that export products to the US show increase in domestic sales

By CHENG YU
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Chinese exporters to the United States are increasingly pivoting to the domestic market as overseas demand softens, with official tax data showing a steady uptick in local sales in April.

Industry experts said that the shift reflects how Chinese manufacturers are reducing their reliance on the US market amid trade tensions triggered by the US and it also aligns with China's broader push to boost domestic consumption for long-term economic growth.

According to the State Taxation Administration, Chinese companies that export their products to the US reported a 4.7 percent year-on-year increase in domestic sales last month. The share of domestic sales in their total revenue also rose by 2 percentage points compared with the first quarter.

Out of 31 major manufacturing sectors, 21 saw domestic sales take up a larger share of revenue. Leather and footwear producers saw the sharpest shift in April, with the domestic share of sales up 10 percentage points from a year earlier.

Other industries with notable increases included computer and telecommunications equipment, ferrous metals, furniture and food processing, all of which recorded gains of more than 5 percentage points in the domestic share of their total sales in April.

Zhang Juan, deputy director of the Shanghai WTO Affairs Consultation Center, said that in today's climate of growing uncertainty, including trade tensions between China and the US, shifting from exports to domestic sales is "no longer a short-term work-around".

"It has become a long-term strategy jointly driven by businesses and the government. Relying on both domestic and international markets is clearly the more stable path forward," she said.

Nearly 85 percent of Chinese exporters are already engaged in domestic sales, which account for

around 75 percent of their total revenue, according to Zhang.

Among these companies is Olod, a kitchenware manufacturer based in Yiwu, Zhejiang province. The company once relied on shipping 500,000 cookware units annually to North America, Europe and the Middle East. But trade tensions and rising costs prompted it to shift 70 percent of its export-oriented goods to the domestic market.

Li Xiongfei, head of Olod, said, "Even though trade tensions are easing, the challenges we faced until now, including a slump in orders and rising costs, showed how vulnerable we are without a strong foothold at home. It made us realize that export alone is not sustainable."

The company now conducts live-streaming e-commerce on WeChat, China's largest social media platform, and its daily sales revenue has exceeded 1 million yuan (\$138,800).

"If global trade is open, we're in. If not, we've got 1.4 billion people right here to do business with," said Li. "You've got to walk on two legs — balancing both domestic and overseas markets — if you want to go far and stay steady."

Since April, major Chinese e-commerce and retail companies have fleshed out plans to assist foreign trade companies in broadening domestic sales avenues, such as opening green channels, joining hands to develop new products, and pooling marketing resources.

These trends also align with China's broader push to boost domestic consumption to stabilize the economy. This year's Government Work Report made strengthening consumer spending the nation's top priority, emphasizing the need to boost the supply of quality products.

Peng Jianzhen, president of the China Chain Store & Franchise Association, said: "Many export-oriented products introduced to the Chinese domestic market have already proved successful in developed countries. With the right adjustments to fit local tastes, there's a huge potential for these products at home."

Hospital bombing



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli airstrike on Tuesday at the European Hospital in Khan Younis, Gaza. The latest round of airstrikes killed 28 people and injured dozens, a spokesman for the Hamas-run civil defence agency said. MARIAM DAGGA / AP PHOTO

Lula hails progress in deepening China-Brazil cooperation

By ZHAO JIA
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Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who concluded a five-day state visit to China on Wednesday, expressed renewed optimism about the expanding potential for deeper Brazil-China cooperation and the broader prospects for global peace and development.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, Lula highlighted the enduring friendship between the two nations grounded in mutual respect, noting that the relationship has become more strategic and made significant strides in recent years.

Reflecting on the evolution of bilateral trade, Lula recalled that in 2003, during his first presidential

term, trade between Brazil and China was worth around \$6.6 billion.

"Today, our bilateral trade exceeds \$160 billion and continues to grow. That's no small achievement," he said, emphasizing the need to deepen cooperation to achieve shared development and prosperity.

During his talks with Lula on Tuesday, President Xi Jinping urged enhanced cooperation between China and Brazil in traditional sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and energy, while also exploring new areas such as energy transition, aerospace, the digital economy and artificial intelligence.

Lula said, "Brazil is ready to increase bilateral investment, expand infrastructure development, and import more high value-



Starry show

Juliette Binoche (center), jury president, and jury members Alba Rohrwacher (left) and Jeremy Strong (right) walk on the red carpet on Tuesday as they arrive for the opening ceremony of the 78th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France. The festival updated its red carpet dress code this year, effectively banning nudity and "voluminous" outfits.

MANON CRUZ / REUTERS

New cross-border route fosters regional connectivity

By LUO WANGSHU
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A convoy of 18 freight trucks and two buses departed from China on Wednesday for Hanoi, Vietnam, marking a key milestone in regional trade connectivity. It will be the first time for Chinese freight vehicles to enter Vietnam's hinterland under the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement, an initiative of the Greater Mekong Subregion cooperation program.

The vehicles, carrying electronic components, vegetables and general merchandise, set off from Kunming in Yunnan province and Nanning in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. They were expected to arrive in Hanoi on Thursday.

The launch signaled a breakthrough in cross-border logistics. Previously, Chinese freight trucks had to stop at the border in Lao Cai, where goods were unloaded and then reloaded onto Vietnamese vehi-

cles. This not only delayed deliveries but also increased logistics costs.

With the cross-border transportation agreement permit in place, trucks can now travel directly from China into major Vietnamese cities without transshipment. The same policy allows Vietnamese trucks to operate in Chinese territory without cargo transfers.

"The launch of international road transport between China and Vietnam is an important milestone in deepening practical cooperation, and another achievement of the Belt and Road Initiative," said Liu Peng, director of the Global Sustainable Transport Innovation and Knowledge Center under China's Ministry of Transport.

Wang Xiuchun, deputy director of the Transport Services Department at the ministry, said, "It reflects China's strong support for connectivity among Greater Mekong Subregion countries and offers an effective path for cross-border economic cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong region,

promoting integration, prosperity, sustainability and inclusiveness."

Vietnamese officials also welcomed the development. "This launch is not just a technical activity — it is a vivid symbol of practical and effective cooperation between our two nations," said Do Quoc Phong, deputy head of the Transport Management Department at Vietnam's Road Administration under the Ministry of Construction.

The transportation agreement facilitates cross-border movement of goods and people among six member countries — China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar.

"This permit works like a passport for a vehicle. In China, we use the domestic vehicle license; abroad, we use the permit. It allows us to travel across Greater Mekong Subregion countries along approved routes," said Jin Jia, director of the International Business Department at Yunnan Maosheng International Logistics.

Pu Xiaoliang, general manager of Yunnan Youjie International Logis-

tics, said: "With the permit, the travel time is reduced by half. It used to take two days to reach Hanoi from Kunming. Now it only takes one. For perishable goods, speed is critical."

Digital platforms are playing an increasing role in optimizing the new transportation corridors.

"Our company helps small and micro logistics firms by breaking technical barriers and lowering costs," said Gong Rui, chairman of Yunnan Yunjie Technology. "Through our platform, we match cargo owners with logistics providers, and we've already helped clients arrange backhaul shipments from Vietnam, reducing empty returns."

China and Vietnam are major trading partners. According to Chinese customs data, bilateral trade in 2024 surpassed \$260 billion.

The cross-border agreement is expected to further enhance trade efficiency, reduce cross-border logistics costs, and boost economic integration across the region.

Trade: Chinese economy engages alternative partners

From page 1

Direct economic gains include the opening of Chinese markets to alternative Arab exports, replacing US imports with significant customs facilitations. This is evident in the increased exports of Egyptian agricultural products to the Chinese market, supported by Chinese tariff exemptions on thousands of goods imported from developing countries, including Arab nations.

Arab ports have assumed a pivotal role as regional hubs amid the disruption in Sino-US trade. The Suez Canal stands as a vital artery for global commerce. With China seeking alternative routes to export its goods to Europe and Africa, the strategic importance of the Suez Canal is rising. Egypt can significantly benefit by attracting substantial Chinese investments to expand its ports on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

These expansions will enable the reception of larger numbers of mega-ships and serve the increasing trade traffic between the East and the West. Furthermore, establishing advanced logistical storage areas near the Suez Canal will facilitate the assembly and distribution of Chinese goods before their re-export to target markets.

The Egyptian Dekheila Port has

witnessed a 40 percent increase in the movement of Chinese containers bound for Europe, and the Jebel Ali Port in the United Arab Emirates has emerged as a hub for the re-export of Chinese goods to Africa. Similarly, Saudi Arabian ports can be transformed into assembly and distribution points for Chinese goods destined for other markets in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Likewise, the development of the Duqm and Al Hamra ports in the Sultanate of Oman can attract Chinese investments and transform them into centers for manufacturing Chinese vehicles aimed at African markets. The Tangier Med Port in Morocco can become a logistical hub for Chinese goods heading to Europe, and the Port of Sudan can be developed as a Chinese gateway to Africa.

Another benefit is attracting increased Chinese investments to Arab countries. China is poised to inject substantial investments into Arab nations, coinciding with a decline in Western investments, as seen in renewable energy projects in Saudi Arabia, the Chinese industrial zone in the Suez Canal Economic Zone in Egypt, and the Chinese logistics center in Jebel Ali in the UAE.

Cooperation with China also attracts significant investments in infrastructure, energy, technology

and local manufacturing, thereby driving economic growth.

Furthermore, strategic partnerships enhance oil and non-oil exports. China is buying more Gulf oil instead of US oil due to rising tariffs. The UAE and Saudi Arabia can also increase their exports of petrochemicals and aluminum to China.

In terms of payment, the adoption of an alternative payment system in Chinese renminbi allows Arab countries to reduce their reliance on the US dollar.

On the geopolitical front, Arab countries have received support from China, particularly for the Palestinian issue in international forums. Arab nations also support China in the World Trade Organization and other international platforms.

Arab support matters

Arab support holds multifaceted importance for China in the face of market disruptions resulting from tariffs. Foremost is the backing of free trade principles. The Arab states' alignment with China in defending a multilateral trading system reinforces China's position as a champion of globalization and free trade against US tariffs. The growing Arab markets serve as a significant outlet for Chinese goods and an expansion of alternative

markets to partially compensate for losses resulting from tariffs-incurred failure to export to the US.

Arab support also earns China enhanced geopolitical influence in a vital region like the Middle East. These strong partnerships with Arab countries help secure energy supplies for China, as a major energy importer, strong relations with Arab oil and gas producing nations are crucial for its economic security, with 40 percent of China's oil imports coming from the Gulf.

This support also contributes to the dissemination of Chinese technology in promising Arab markets, especially in the Gulf, Morocco and Egypt, and promotes the Chinese currency, with increased use of the RMB in trade and projects between China and Arab countries, even leading to the inclusion of the RMB in the reserves of Arab central banks.

Ultimately, China and the Arab states share mutual gains, starting from the vital role of Arab ports for China and culminating in the contribution to building a more just, balanced and multipolar world order.

The author is a researcher in Israeli studies and international relations at the Center for Arab-Eurasian Studies in Egypt. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

both countries are committed to working together to safeguard free trade and oppose protectionism.

The Brazilian president cited the recent progress in trade negotiations between China and the United States, including substantial tariff reductions, as a reminder of the importance of preserving national sovereignty, while calling for a return to a rules-based multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization.

"Imposing punitive tariffs as a means of sanctioning other nations is unacceptable," he said, calling for a more fair and inclusive world order.

Looking ahead, Lula said that Brazil will host the BRICS Summit in July, during which economic development and climate change will top the agenda.

He described BRICS as a new model of South-South cooperation that fosters joint solutions and amplifies the Global South's voice in

shaping international rules that better reflect 21st century realities.

"BRICS is not about dominating the world, it is about contributing to global development," he said, dismissing claims that the group seeks to confront the Global North.

"The world has changed. We don't want a single global power or a so-called 'world police.' What we need are cooperative partners and mutual respect among nations," he added.

Lula welcomed recent signs of progress in peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. He noted that Brazil, over the past three years, has actively promoted dialogue, and together with China, launched the Group of Friends for Peace on the Ukraine crisis.

On Tuesday, China and Brazil issued a joint statement on the Ukraine crisis, reiterating their readiness to cooperate with other Global South nations in supporting efforts toward a peaceful resolution.

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CHINA

Taking aim

People try shooting training equipment displayed at the 12th China International Police Equipment Exhibition, which opened in Beijing on Wednesday. The event will run until Saturday, showcasing cutting-edge technologies and police equipment that have drawn in a large number of visitors.

GAN NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Student becomes 20,000th stem cell donor

By WANG XIAOYU in Yueyang, Hunan
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The grim image of a needle piercing skin and pelvic bone to draw out marrow is what comes to mind for many when they think of stem cell donation.

Wang Juntao, a college student who registered as a donor on a whim about four years ago, was no different. So when the 22-year-old received a call in February informing him he was a potential match for a blood disease patient, he was slightly confused.

"I checked information available online carefully and consulted with local Red Cross officials," he said. "I learned that stem cell donation is actually very safe and only involves some temporary discomfort. I can potentially save another person's life with some effort, so I decided to go ahead with the donation."

Wang completed the harvesting procedure earlier this month and became the country's 20,000th unrelated hematopoietic stem cell donor, according to the China Marrow Donor Program. The announcement was made at an event on

3.6 million

The number of people listed in China's registry for potential stem cell donors

Tuesday evening in Yueyang, Hunan province.

The organization said more than 3.6 million people are now listed in China's registry for potential stem cell donors, making it the largest in Asia and the fourth largest in the world.

The number of unrelated stem cell transplantations nationwide exceeded 10,000 in September 2020 and has now surpassed 20,000, including 400 for patients from overseas.

"These donors come from different backgrounds, including college students born in the 2000s, medical workers, delivery couriers and veterans," said Wang Bin, vice-president of the Red Cross Society of China. "They have given another human being a second chance at life and exemplified social responsibility and universal love through their compassionate and selfless acts."

Stem cell transplantation is a critical tool in treating and saving the lives of blood disease patients. Liu Can, director of the cellular transplantation department at Hunan Provincial People's Hospital, said that despite advances in new therapies, stem cell transplantation remains irreplaceable for conditions such as acute leukemia and severe aplastic anemia.

"At our hospital, stem cell recipients achieve a five-year survival rate of about 80 percent, and many child patients with thalassemia have achieved clinical remission thanks to the procedure," Liu said.

Sun Hua, chief of the hematology department at Yueyang Central Hospital, said eligible donors must be age 18 to 45 and meet basic health criteria.

"A typical stem cell collection requires only 200 milliliters of peripheral blood per session — compared to 400 milliliters for a standard blood donation," Sun said. "Also, the body naturally regenerates these cells, making the procedure very safe."

Xu Xianhui, a Red Cross worker in Yueyang, said one of the most

common misconceptions is that the process involves extracting bone marrow from the spine.

"In reality, the procedure typically involves injecting mobilizing agents a few days beforehand and then collecting stem cells from peripheral blood through a vein in the arm," she said. "It is completely safe."

She added that the local Red Cross provides donors with health checkups before and after the procedure, as well as benefits such as lifetime free public transportation and access to tourist attractions.

For Wang, the mobilizing agent caused temporary nausea and headaches, but the symptoms soon subsided.

His only complaint now is that he had to pause his exercise routine and has gained some weight.

Donors are advised to avoid intense workouts for at least a month after the procedure.

"Overall, I feel proud for contributing to such a meaningful cause," he said. "Many people still don't understand stem cell donation, so I hope my actions will help raise awareness and spread accurate scientific knowledge."

Study finds special protein can help protect gut health

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Chinese scientists have discovered a new way to know how hosts and gut bacteria interact, potentially opening doors for more precise treatments for diseases linked to imbalances in the gut's microbial environment.

The findings suggest that instead of simply tolerating the vast array of microbes in the gut, the host actively shapes this community, maintaining a dynamic equilibrium.

Experts note that trillions of microorganisms reside in the human gut, playing critical roles in digestion and the development of the immune system. These microbes release various molecules that interact with the host, influencing the growth and function of immune cells.

An imbalance in the gut microbiome, known as dysbiosis, is increasingly linked to various health problems, including obesity, diabe-

tes, fatty liver disease and neurodegenerative disorders, according to medical professionals.

A key question in the field has been whether hosts can specifically recognize and manage particular bacteria within the complex microbial community.

Using advanced proteomics technologies, research teams from the Shanghai Institute of Nutrition and Health at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the CAS Center for Excellence in Molecular Cell Science discovered that epithelial cells in the mouse gut secrete a "smart identifier" protein called APOL9.

Through an innovative technique combining flow cytometry and microbiome sequencing, the researchers found that this protein can precisely identify a class of bacteria called Bacteroidales. APOL9 scans the bacteria's cell membranes for specific lipid "tags", similar to a barcode reader, enabling selective identification.

"We found a similar process hap-

pens to the human homolog APOL2 proteins," said Qian Youcun, a researcher from the Shanghai Institute of Nutrition and Health, CAS.

APOL9 then triggers the targeted bacteria to release "information capsules" known as outer membrane vesicles, or OMVs, to communicate with the host.

Dendritic cells capture these OMVs, activating an immune response that enhances the expression of the "alert system" molecule MHC-II and promotes the development of specific immune cells. This process boosts the gut's defense against harmful bacteria.

A paper detailing the 11-year research effort was published on Wednesday on the website of the journal Nature.

"Such discoveries challenge our traditional understanding of gut microbiota management, highlighting that the body not only maintains balance through broad-spectrum antimicrobial mechanisms, but also possesses the ability for 'targeted

communication.' APOL9 acts as a well-trained 'bacterial diplomat,' establishing refined cooperation with specific bacteria to help maintain gut immune homeostasis," said Qian, who is also a co-corresponding author of the paper.

Qian stated that future research will focus on further exploring the function of the human APOL2 protein and how regulating this pathway can strengthen the gut's immune barrier.

"This research is expected to lead to a range of innovative therapies, such as designing medicines to induce specific bacteria to release OMVs and developing intelligent probiotics carrying special lipid 'tags,'" he said.

Jiang Changtao, a professor at the School of Basic Medical Sciences, Peking University, noted that the conserved function of human APOL2 suggests this mechanism may be relevant across species, laying a foundation for translational medical research.

Implant allows user to play computer games using mind

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai
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A quadruple amputee who participated in a brain-machine interface trial has managed to play computer games using only their thoughts, marking a significant milestone in BMI technology development in China.

The participant, who lost all four limbs in a high-voltage electrical accident, received a BMI implant at Shanghai's Huashan Hospital affiliated with Fudan University on March 25. The device was developed by StairMed, a Shanghai-based medical technology company.

The procedure involved inserting two ultra-flexible electrodes — approximately one-hundredth the thickness of human hair — into his brain. These electrodes connect to a 1-yuan-coin-sized implant embedded in his skull that wirelessly transmits brain signals to external devices, converting neural activity into computer commands.

Following less than a month of training, the participant achieved control comparable to an able-bodied person using a touch pad to play chess, racing games and others.

"I can now control the computer with my thoughts. It feels like my intentions directly translate into

actions," according to the participant.

The experiment marked China's first invasive BMI first-in-man clinical trial, making StairMed the second company globally — after Elon Musk-backed Neuralink — to reach the clinical trial stage for invasive BMI technology and prepare for clinical application.

"The first-in-man clinical trial is an important milestone toward clinical application," said Zhao Zhengtuo, a cofounder of StairMed. "Through this trial, we have achieved complete product certainty with a small sample size. The next step is to increase the number of

participants for statistically significant results."

StairMed's implant, measuring 26 millimeters in diameter and less than 6 mm in thickness, is approximately half the thickness of Neuralink's device, while the electrodes have a cross-sectional area just one-fifth to one-seventh of Neuralink's, said Li Qie, another StairMed cofounder.

Installation requires only a 3-5 mm skull perforation, with sensors placed 5-8 mm deep in the brain, and the implant sits flush with the skull and is virtually undetectable under the scalp.

"It requires only a shallow groove

Lai ripped for 'distorting' WWII history

Taiwan leader ignores suppressing of people under Japanese aggression

By ZHANG YI
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A Chinese mainland spokesman on Wednesday strongly criticized Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te for "distorting" the history of World War II and disregarding the suffering of people in Taiwan under Japanese occupation, accusing him of pushing a separatist narrative.

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, made the remarks following criticism in Taiwan of Lai's recent speech at an event marking the end of World War II, where he promoted "pro-independence" rhetoric.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the World Anti-Fascist War, and the restoration of Taiwan.

"As the main battlefield in Asia, China paid a staggering price with over 35 million military and civilian casualties and ultimately secured a great victory," Chen said. He added that Taiwan's return to China in 1945 was a key outcome of the war and part of the postwar international order.

In his speech, Lai made no mention of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, instead warning that Taiwan and Europe were facing the threat of "a new authoritarian bloc".

Chen accused Lai of conflating the anti-fascist struggle of World War II with the Democratic Progressive Party's separatist ambitions. He said Lai was using a false narrative of "democracy against authoritarianism" to deceive the public and international opinion.

"Eighty years ago, China defeated the brutal Japanese invaders and recovered Taiwan. Eighty years later, a stronger China will never allow Taiwan to be

China defeated the brutal Japanese invaders and recovered Taiwan. Eighty years later, a stronger China will never allow Taiwan to be separated from the country."

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office

separated from the country," Chen said.

Public criticism in Taiwan has also targeted Lai for what some call "selective amnesia" regarding Japan's colonial-era atrocities, including the massacre of Taiwan people.

Instead, Lai attended a memorial in Tainan for Hata Yoichi, a Japanese engineer who worked in Taiwan during Japan's occupation. There, he compared Taiwan-Japan relations to "family ties".

Ni Yongjie, director of the Shanghai Institute of Taiwan Studies, said some DPP politicians and separatists have long "taken the foe for one's father" by glorifying Japan's colonial rule and ignoring its wartime crimes, including the killing of an estimated 650,000 Taiwan people.

"They shamelessly praise Japanese aggression, celebrate Hata Yoichi's so-called contributions to Taiwan's water facilities and willingly accept the humiliation of colonial enslavement," Ni said.

Lai's actions, he added, have taken the "pro-independence" narrative to an "unimaginable level", disregarding historical facts and undermining the postwar international order.

Bridge building



The under construction Jixin Yellow River Bridge in Henan province on Tuesday. With a main span of 510 meters, the bridge is part of a highway project connecting Jiyuan city and Xin'an county in Henan. The bridge is expected to open by the end of the year. LIU YUCAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

in the skull rather than complete penetration, minimizing tissue disruption while improving the BMI's clinical acceptability and application scope," Li said.

While Neuralink's first-generation product features 64 electrodes and 1,024 channels, StairMed's system achieves effective device control with just two electrodes and 64 channels, with no observed electrode migration in trials.

StairMed plans to conduct three to four prospective clinical trials, followed by larger multicenter registration trials with 30 to 40 participants by early 2026. Market entry is anticipated around 2028, pending regulatory approvals.

Future applications may include control of mechanical arms, wheelchairs and embodied intelligent

robots, according to Zhao.

The advancement comes as China's BMI research and development has been accelerating. In March, the National Healthcare Security Administration established new pricing categories for BMI procedures, signaling potential clinical implementation in the near future. Various local governments, including Beijing and Shanghai, have implemented policies supporting BMI technology development and industrialization.

Founded in 2021, StairMed secured 350 million yuan (\$48.5 million) in Series B funding in February. The company has established a 2,000-square-meter production facility in Shanghai's Pudong New Area, including 300 square meters of clean rooms.

WORLD

Crouching Tiger still unites East and West after 25 years

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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When *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* director Ang Lee looks back on the famous martial arts film a quarter-century later, he can't believe what it took to make the Oscar-winning movie.

"I honestly don't know how I did it. The energy, the emotion, the scale — it's something I can no longer replicate. It's a hidden dragon in myself," Lee said.

He spoke before a special screening at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles on Friday, marking the 25th anniversary of the Chinese-language film.

The event was part of Raising the Lantern: A Celebration of Chinese-Language Cinema, a six-week series highlighting Chinese-language films submitted for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film over the past 35 years.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon received 10 Oscar nominations in the 2001 Academy Awards — then a record for a non-English language film — and won four, namely Best International Feature Film, Best Cinematography, Best Original Score and Best Art Direction. Lee was nominated for Best Director.

Janet Yang, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the first Asian American to hold the post, described *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a landmark achievement that continues to resonate globally.

"Lee's film is emblazoned in our hearts and minds as a singular leap in filmmaking," Yang told the audience. "Rooted in a distinctly commercial genre, it took visionary talent to elevate *wuxia* (martial arts fiction genre) into high art."

Set in 19th-century China, it tells the story of a legendary warrior (Chow Yun-fat) who entrusts his sword to his lover (Michelle Yeoh), only for it to be stolen by the mysterious Yu Jiaolong (Zhang Ziyi), setting off an epic saga of love, betrayal and redemption.

Enduring impact

In a pre-screening discussion, Lee reflected on the film's enduring impact and the diverse cast and crew that brought it to life.

"We had an incredible mix of talent from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities," said Lee. "Together, we created something greater than the sum of its parts, what I called a pursuit of the hidden dragon within us."

Lee, who was born in the Taiwan region to parents from the Chinese mainland and later studied in the United States, described the film as a personal cultural exploration.

"My heritage is deeply rooted in

traditional Chinese culture," said Lee, who has won Academy Awards for Best Director for two other films. "When making this film, I traveled across China — from the deserts of Xinjiang to bamboo forests in the south. I saw the blue skies, green waters and felt the spirit of the land. That spirit became part of the film."

For Lee, the character of Li Mubai portrayed by Chow symbolizes a restrained, idealized hero. "He's like a gentleman warrior, calm on the surface but with a storm within. That's the hidden dragon," Lee said. "Perhaps I was chasing an imaginary China — a place of elegance, depth and contradictions. And through this film, all of us came together to find that dragon."

Lee emphasized that Chinese martial arts in the film were more than stylized action, they were philosophy in motion.

"Martial arts reflect the Tao — the natural way of the universe. In Eastern culture, we believe in something bigger than ourselves. Harmony, restraint and respect guide our actions," he explained. "Even drinking tea or engaging in combat is part of that philosophical framework."

Yet, Lee admitted that his artistic sensibilities often blend the East and the West. "Though I come from the East and value harmony, my real talent lies in Western drama," he noted. "So, with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, I combined both philosophy and action, restraint and drama, all within the framework of a love story."

The film's blend of visual poetry and martial arts redefined the *wuxia* genre for global audiences. "We didn't just make a martial arts film," Lee said. "We made a film about love, loss and longing about culture, identity and imagination."

Yang noted that the film's global success also sparked a resurgence in martial arts cinema. "Western audiences weren't familiar with the genre at that level," she said. "But *Crouching Tiger* changed that."

Audience members at the Academy Museum screening shared their appreciation. Among them was veteran Hollywood film producer Donna Smith, former president of physical and post-production at Universal Pictures.

"*Crouching Tiger* is truly one of my favorite films," Smith told China Daily. "It's a film with an enduring legacy that continues to unite East and West."

Another attendee, Rich Erickson, said the film feels fresh even after 25 years.

"The first time, I was captivated by the action," he told China Daily. "But now, I'm even more moved by the emotional resonance and the philosophy behind the martial arts. It's truly timeless."



Director Ang Lee (center), actress Zhang Ziyi (left) and Janet Yang, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, discuss *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* during the film's 25th anniversary celebrations in Los Angeles on Friday. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

Twisted and thirsty



A drone view shows vehicles on a bridge across a partially dry section of the Woodhead Reservoir after a prolonged period without rain, which resulted in water levels dropping, near Tintwistle, Britain, on Tuesday. Millions of households face the looming threat of water restrictions as England grapples with its driest start to the year in nearly a century. PHIL NOBLE / REUTERS

Deeper ties between Europe, China urged

Former European Council head calls for more stability amid global uncertainty

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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As China and the European Union celebrate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations this year, the two sides should engage in a frank, transparent and respectful dialogue to deepen cooperation and to seek more stability, security, productivity and prosperity for their people, which is especially important given the rising global uncertainty and complexity, said Charles Michel, former president of the European Council.

Michel, also the former Belgian prime minister and a distinguished professor at the China Europe International Business School in Shanghai, made these comments in an interview with China Daily during his visit to Shanghai in early May.

Issues that are at the top of the agenda for the world now, including climate change and global health, require deeper cooperation between China and the EU. Changes regarding internet development and internet partnerships cannot be solved at the national level. China and the EU should come up with a new plan by taking into account their respective concerns and interests, and jointly address these challenges, he said.

The EU story is proof that joining forces can lead to great results, he added.

Michel emphasized that a trade war "is not the right option". On the contrary, those who attempted to launch a trade war could be affected by their own decisions. Additional tariffs or trade barriers would pose serious risks for everyone.

"This is not what we want. That is why we are always open to dialogue, to discuss and to identify

Challenges can be resolved only through sincere and effective international cooperation. It is possible to make agreements where one plus one is more than two."

Charles Michel, former president of the European Council and a distinguished professor at the China Europe International Business School

what the concerns and legitimate interests are ... Challenges can be resolved only through sincere and effective international cooperation. It is possible to make agreements where one plus one is more than two," he said.

As Michel understands, the world is now standing at a crossroads. Against this backdrop, the World Trade Organization has a fundamental role to play, he said, suggesting a reform of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism.

He also suggested that the European Investment Bank develop some financial tools to inject more finance into strategic sectors such as energy and digital infrastructure.

Through this process, the EU is willing to expand its influence to become a good partner with the

rest of the world. The EU should also retain its strategic autonomy to develop its capabilities in defense and security, he added.

But Michel admitted China and the EU are "not always systematically on the same page", and that he never underestimates the differences between the two sides.

Sharing concerns

"Cooperating at the diplomatic and educational levels as well as sharing each other's concerns can lead to better mutual understanding," he said.

Speaking about the developments in the rapidly evolving world of artificial intelligence, concerns have been expressed in the EU that AI and big data are being misused by some. There has been manipulation of the emerging technologies, transforming them into instruments of dominance. Therefore, Michel stressed that sharing concerns and ideas on this front is crucial to ensure technologies can benefit the entire humanity.

On the ongoing talks between China and the EU regarding imports of electric vehicles, Michel hopes that acceptable solutions would be found based on the efforts made by both sides. A "sustainable and predictable legal framework" between China and the EU can benefit European companies in China, and vice versa, he said.

According to the General Administration of Customs, the bilateral trade between China and the EU reached 5.59 trillion yuan (\$762 billion) in 2024, up 1.6 percent year-on-year. The EU continues to be China's second-largest trading partner, after the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.



Online
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Iran to hold nuclear talks with UK, France and Germany

TEHERAN — Iran will hold a fresh round of nuclear talks with European powers in Türkiye later this week, its foreign ministry said on Wednesday.

The talks with the UK, France and Germany would be held in Istanbul on Friday, ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said, quoted by state news agency IRNA.

French diplomatic sources gave the same information, but there was still no word from Berlin or London on the meeting which was originally slated for earlier this month but postponed.

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said the talks would be held "at the level of deputy foreign ministers".

The European nations — known as the E3 — were among the world powers that negotiated the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal along with China, Russia and the United States.

US President Donald Trump, in his first term, effectively torpedoed the accord in 2018 by unilaterally withdrawing the US.

Since returning to office in January, Trump has revived his "maximum pressure" approach against Teheran. While backing nuclear diplomacy, he also warned of potential military action if it fails.

Iran has held several discreet meetings on the nuclear with the E3 since late last year, most recently in February in Geneva, ahead of indirect negotiations with Washington that began on April 12.

"While we continue the dialogue with the United States, we are also ready to talk with the Europeans," Araghchi said.

"Unfortunately, the Europeans themselves have become somewhat isolated in these negotiations with their own policies," he added, without elaborating.

"We do not want such a situation and that's why we have continued our negotiations" with them, he said.

'Difficult but useful'

Friday's meeting will follow the latest round of Oman-mediated Iran-US talks on Sunday, which Teheran described as "difficult but useful" while a US official said Washington was "encouraged".

Western countries, including the US, have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, while Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

European governments are currently weighing whether to trigger the "snapback" mechanism under the 2015 deal, which would reinstate UN sanctions in response to Iranian noncompliance — an option that expires in October.

On Tuesday, Trump criticized Iran's leadership, regional role, alleged mismanagement, and threatened to slash its oil exports if nuclear talks fail.

Araghchi dismissed the remarks as a "very deceptive view" of Iran and blamed US sanctions, pressure and both military and nonmilitary threats for hindering the country's progress.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Brazilian scientist wins World Food Prize for novel way to aid grain boom

DES MOINES, Iowa — A Brazilian scientist who pushed back against chemical fertilizers and researched biologically based approaches for more robust food production has been honored with this year's World Food Prize, the organization announced on Tuesday.

Microbiologist Mariangela Hungria's research helped her country become an agricultural power house, an accomplishment that has now won her \$500,000 from the Iowa-based World Food Prize Foundation. Hungria has been researching biological seed and soil treatments for 40 years, and has worked with Brazilian farmers to implement her findings.

"I still cannot believe it. Everybody said, my whole life, it's improbable, you are going the wrong way, just go to things like chemicals and so on. And then, I received the most important prize in the world of agriculture," Hungria said in an interview.

Norman Borlaug, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his work to dramatically increase crop yields and reduce the threat of starvation in many countries, founded the World Food Prize. Since the first prize was handed out in 1987, 55 people have been honored.

Hungria said she grew up wanting to alleviate hunger. Early in her career, she decided to focus on a pro-

cess called biological nitrogen fixation, in which soil bacteria could be used to promote plant growth.

At that time, farmers in Brazil and around the world were reluctant to reduce their use of nitrogen fertilizers, which dramatically increase crop production but lead to greenhouse gas emissions and pollute waterways.

Hungria studied how bacteria can interact with plant roots to naturally produce nitrogen. She then demonstrated her work on test plots and began working directly with farmers to convince them they wouldn't have to sacrifice high crop

yields if they switched to a biological process.

The work is credited for increasing yields of several crops, including wheat, corn and beans, but it has been especially effective on soybeans. Brazil has since become the world's largest soybean producer, surpassing the United States and Argentina.

Although Hungria's research could be applied to farms in other countries, soybean production in the US is different from it is in Brazil. US farmers typically rotate crops on their land between growing corn and soybeans. Enough nitrate fertilizer applied to corn still remains in the soil when soy-

beans are planted that little or no fertilizer needs to be applied, Hungria said.

Brazilian agricultural companies have faced fierce criticism for clearing forested land to create farmland, largely to grow soybeans.

Much of that criticism is justified, Hungria said, but she added that her biological approach builds up the soil and makes further encroachment into forested areas less necessary.

"If you manage the crop well, the crop will enrich the soil with nitrogen. Soil health improves if you do the right things," she said.

Hungria will be awarded her prize at an annual October gathering in

Des Moines, Iowa, of agricultural researchers and officials from around the world.

Gebisa Ejeta, chair of the World Food Prize Laureate Selection Committee, credited Hungria for her "extraordinary scientific achievements" that have transformed agriculture in South America.

"Her brilliant scientific work and her committed vision for advancing sustainable crop production to feed humanity with judicious use of chemical fertilizer inputs and biological amendments have gained her global recognition both at home and abroad," Ejeta said in a statement.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

Briefly Received by NSD/PARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

PERU
PM resigns ahead of no-confidence vote

Peru's Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen submitted his resignation on Tuesday, hours before Congress was set to debate at least three motions seeking his removal. "In consideration of the nation's higher interests, I feel duty-bound to present my irrevocable resignation from the position of president of the Council of Ministers," Adrianzen said in a televised address. He was joined by his cabinet and President Dina Boluarte, who has consistently defended him and praised his performance.

JAPAN
Two missing after military plane crashes

A search was launched on Wednesday for two crew members reported missing after a Japanese air force training plane crashed minutes after takeoff. The T-4 training aircraft belonging to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force took off from Komaki Air Base, in the central prefecture of Aichi, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said. The force said the plane was lost from radar two minutes after taking off. Authorities are searching for the missing aircraft and its crew in an area near a reservoir known as the Iruka pond, officials said. Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said parts of the aircraft have been found at the crash site and the cause of the crash is under investigation.

UNITED STATES
Harvard sues govt over funding cuts

Harvard University expanded its lawsuit challenging the Donald Trump administration's moves to cut off billions of dollars in federal funding to the Ivy League school on Tuesday after officials said they are terminating an additional \$450 million in grants. Harvard filed the amended complaint in federal court in Boston hours after a federal antisemitism task force announced that eight government agencies were canceling additional grants on top of the \$2.2 billion in funding that the administration had already terminated. The task force did so after accusing the school of failing to confront "pervasive race discrimination and antisemitic harassment plaguing its campus."

Microsoft fires about 3% of its workforce

Microsoft began laying off about 6,000 workers on Tuesday, nearly 3 percent of its entire workforce and its largest job cuts in more than two years. That included 1,985 workers in its home state of Washington, according to a filing posted on the state's labor affairs agency. Microsoft said the layoffs will be across all levels, teams and geographies, but the cuts will focus on reducing the number of managers. Notices to employees began going out on Tuesday.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



The military forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea carry out a tactical drill at an undisclosed location on Tuesday. KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY VIA REUTERS

Australia meat producers tap Chinese market

By XIN XIN and ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney

Australian meat producers are poised to further tap the lucrative Chinese market, following fresh approvals that will allow more exporters to supply sheep, lamb and goat products to China.

The Australian Meat Industry Council has welcomed the latest move by the Chinese authorities that grants 17 Australian export establishments access to the Chinese market for supplying chilled and frozen sheep and goat meat.

"The outcome is a significant win for Australian sheep, lamb and goat processing and export businesses that will have benefits across the red meat supply chain," the council said. The approvals, announced last month by China's General Administration of Customs, consist of new market access for 10 establishments and expanded product categories for seven others.

Tim Ryan, CEO of the council, said the move is the result of years of sustained efforts by government and industry, reflecting the strength of China-Australia relations.

"Industry and government have welcomed opportunities to demonstrate to China's regulators that Australia has robust systems and quality assurance measures in place to reliably produce and export safe, quality meat and meat products to

Chinese consumers," he said.

China is Australia's most important destination for sheep meat exports, according to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In January alone, Australian mutton exports to China surged 16 percent year-on-year to more than 7,300 metric tons, according to the industry service provider Meat and Livestock Australia.

These exports have helped keep Australia's red meat trade with China well above long-term averages, with the sector valued at \$2 billion in 2023-24, according to a statement from Julie Collins, Australia's minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Gundagai Meat Processors, a privately owned company that processes more than 1 million sheep and lambs annually, said China's move to grant wider market access marks a major milestone for Australia's meat sector.

"We have had our application for a number of years and have been patiently awaiting the green light," CEO Will Barton told China Daily.

"China was the last significant market we were yet to gain access to. So, this final piece of the puzzle now enables us to participate in all key global markets.

"It strengthens our ability to manage short-term disruptions, like seasonal variability, disease risk or global tariff tensions, by having more channels open to sell into."

The company expects to begin

shipments "within weeks, pending completion of the required paperwork," Barton said.

For Chinese consumers, the expanded access means a wider range of Australian lamb and sheep meat products will soon be available — ranging from premium marbled cuts suited for food service and retail, to traditional items popular in hotpot and other culinary uses, he added.

Angus Gidley-Baird, a senior analyst at agribusiness banking group Rabobank, said the new approvals were certainly a positive, with China being a major market.

"We have got large production volumes for both lamb and mutton at the moment, so having greater access to that market would be very beneficial," he said.

"Australia is fortunate. We have got good quality, food safety, traceability, and strong biosecurity measures; it is certainly a great opportunity for Australia to be able to supply (more) and gain better access."

Beijing resident Chen Zhixing, a computer engineer and regular consumer of lamb and mutton dishes, welcomed the increased variety from Australia.

"We have good domestic meat, but increasing the choices from overseas will raise the bar and benefit everyone," he said.

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Flood fury

Vehicles are submerged in floodwaters in Westport, Maryland, on Tuesday after torrential rains triggered flash floods across parts of western Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The deluge left a 12-year-old boy missing in Virginia and prompted evacuations at rural elementary schools in Maryland.

ALLEY AND TIM WADE VIA AP

Small parcels rule exemption gives respite to US customers

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

US customers of Chinese online discount retailers such as Shein and Temu have got a respite from high prices with a reduction in duties on smaller packages.

The administration of United States President Donald Trump announced on Monday it would reduce tariffs on low-cost packages from China that fall under the de minimis exemption — from 120 percent to 54 percent.

The de minimis tax law is a loophole that allows low-cost parcels to enter the US duty-free and avoid customs inspections if they have a retail value under \$800. The announcement was made on the same weekend when the US and China paused higher tariffs on each other for 90 days.

A flat fee of \$100 will remain on parcels starting Wednesday, while the \$200 charge that was to be imposed from next month was canceled.

Z. John Zhang, a professor of mar-

keting at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, told China Daily that Shein and Temu have become popular with US shoppers "because they get the order and then produce it," allowing them to be "fast, low-cost and have a lot of choices".

The move is widely seen as another step in de-escalating trade tensions between the world's two largest economies. It will also enable the companies to import more goods amid the pause.

"This is great for Shein and Temu, if nothing else, to replenish their US inventory," Yao Jin, an associate professor of supply chain management at Miami University of Ohio, told USA Today.

Estimates by Baird Equity Research suggest that in 2018, at least 75 percent of all the packages that entered the US under de minimis were from China. Today, it is more than 60 percent.

In February, Trump suspended the rule for China by imposing a tax of 120 percent of the package's value or a planned flat fee of \$200.

The administration initially described it as a "critical step in countering the ongoing health emergency posed by the illicit flow of synthetic opioids into the US".

However, the pause sparked confusion as the US Postal Service said on Feb 5 that it would stop accepting parcels from China temporarily. It reversed course 12 hours later, and the service was resumed.

The Trump administration then delayed the implementation of the rule until the Commerce Department could set up a system to process inspections and levies on the shipments.

Sufficient systems

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick confirmed to the administration last month that sufficient systems were in place to collect tariff revenue.

On April 2, the so-called Liberation Day, Trump signed an executive order to eliminate de minimis for China.

In fiscal year 2024, at least 1.36 billion shipments utilized de minimis, an increase of 637 million compared

with 2020, according to US Customs and Border Protection.

In 2018, Chinese exports under de minimis were worth \$5.3 billion, but rose to \$66 billion in 2023, the Congressional Research Service found. Much of the parcels are shipped directly from China to the customer.

It could have cost US consumers between \$11 billion and \$13 billion if the rule was eliminated, according to the paper "The Value of De Minimis Imports" by the Department of Economics at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Yale University.

Zhang, from the University of Pennsylvania, who helps companies on pricing strategies, market entry and channel and retail management, had warned that Temu and Shein might have to adjust their business models if de minimis ended.

He advised that the way they can keep US-based customers, despite any higher fees, is to keep the ethos of fast fashion alive — such as providing low-cost goods, using automation and shifting more production to the US.

Experts praise strengthened China-LAC ties

Forum sets out new blueprint for global collaboration amid growing divisions

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong, CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels and YANG GAO in Toronto

The partnership between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries — founded on mutual respect, equality and shared benefits — stands as a model for global collaboration, experts say.

This vision was reinforced on Tuesday as President Xi Jinping addressed the opening ceremony of the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum in Beijing.

Speaking at the China National Convention Center, Xi said China firmly supports Latin American and Caribbean countries in pursuing development paths suited to their national conditions, safeguarding sovereignty and independence, and opposing external interference. China, he added, will work with LAC countries to support each other on issues central to their core interests and major concerns.

Xi stressed the need for China and LAC countries — important members of the Global South — to uphold solidarity and coordination and rise to global challenges with resolve, amid rising unilateralism and protectionism.

Carlos Martinez, a London-based commentator and co-editor of the platform Friends of Socialist China, said the forum's message is that LAC countries are sovereign and independent, not anyone's backyard.

"Unlike the United States, which is trying to sow discord in the region and impose hegemony over them, China is committed to promoting development and prosperity while respecting all countries' sovereignty and independence," he said.

China is now Latin America's second-largest trading partner, and the region has become the second-largest destination for Chinese investment abroad. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, more than 200 infrastructure projects have been implemented across Latin America and the Caribbean, creating more than 1 million jobs.

"China's cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean is based on mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and sets an example for the world," Martinez said.

'Outstanding event'

Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, a professor of political science at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires, Argentina, hailed the forum's ministerial meeting in Beijing as "an outstanding event".

The gathering was a good case for cooperation between a major global power and a unified bloc from the Global South, and for political willingness to promote coexistence, peace and security, he said.

It also underscored the urgent need for a new global dialogue and showed that diplomacy is the most effective tool against bullying, revisionism and brinkmanship, he added.

In his speech on Tuesday, Xi announced that China stands ready to join hands with its LAC partners to launch five programs — focusing on solidarity, development, civilization, peace and people-to-people connectivity — to advance shared development and revitalization.

Maarj Farooq, deputy editor-in-chief at Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group, said the five programs aim at boosting development, revitalization and multilateral collaboration across the Global South.

China's cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean is based on mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and sets an example for the world."

Carlos Martinez, a London-based commentator and co-editor of the platform Friends of Socialist China

He highlighted the people-to-people connectivity program as "a powerful testament to the importance of cultural diplomacy and mutual understanding in today's fragmented world."

"At a time when mistrust and misinformation often define global narratives, fostering genuine people-to-people ties can play a transformative role in reshaping perceptions and building sustainable peace," he said.

Dicky Budiman, a scholar affiliated with Griffith University in Australia and YARSI University in Indonesia, said the peace program is both timely and relevant, with the potential to set a new benchmark on how global partnerships can redefine the architecture of health security in the 21st century.

"The peace program, if implemented with a strong emphasis on health system strengthening and inclusive governance, can become a cornerstone of regional stability and a model for South-South cooperation," he said.

"Integrated disaster governance — encompassing pandemics, natural disasters and climate-related crises — is foundational to both regional stability and global health diplomacy."

Yang Ran in Beijing contributed to this story.

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Homeward bound



Sudanese refugees who fled to Egypt amid domestic conflict wait at a bus station in Cairo on Tuesday, preparing to return home following the Sudanese army's capture of al-Hamadi in South Kordofan state. The army's advance against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has restored security in parts of the war-torn region, prompting some displaced families to make the journey back. MOHAMED ELSHAHED VIA GETTY IMAGES

ACROSS ASIA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit: 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

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.

PREPAREDNESS A PRIORITY

Nations should not only be ready for the possibility of an earthquake, but also make efforts to mitigate impacts of such a disaster: Experts

Editor's note: Over one month after the Myanmar earthquake, this ANN special report examines why it led to so much devastation, the current situation in quake-hit areas, and why earthquake preparedness is crucial.

More than a month after a massive earthquake rattled Myanmar, about 207,000 people, including a large number of women and children, remain displaced, of whom about 42,000 are living in 135 temporary shelters, according to April 22 data from the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, or AHA Centre.

The earthquake was so devastating that it necessitated rebuilding and relocation plans in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, Thailand-based online newspaper The Nation reported.

The capital's urban layout is now under review, the article continued, with Myanmar's leader Min Aung Hlaing announcing plans to redesign the city's urban structure during a cabinet meeting held shortly after the quake.

To grasp the massive, destructive scale of the recent earthquake, one must understand the many factors that contributed to it, said Md Sakawat Hossain, professor at the Department of Geological Sciences at Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka.

"A 7.7-magnitude earthquake is quite major by itself. Paired with the shallow depth of the origin (about 10 kilometers) and proximity to major cities Naypyidaw and Mandalay, it has caused intense destruction we see today.

"For context, the amount of energy released during this earthquake was about 330 times that of the Hiroshima bombing."

The resulting conditions are nothing short of catastrophic. Food is difficult to come by and hygiene is a massive concern given the lack of access to reliable sources of clean water for drinking and washing.

The temporary tents, per AHA Centre, are constructed from materials that cannot withstand severe weather, such as heavy rain and extreme heat.

In the wake of the earthquake, the ASEAN said it strengthened the relief and recovery efforts through the ASEAN standby arrangements and ASEAN member states' contributions, among other mechanisms.

Individual countries, neighboring and from farther afield, have also stepped up to give aid, be it through the deployment of rescue workers, paramedics, and even sniffer dogs — some of whom doubled as therapy dogs for survivors and their families, as reported by The Nation.

Reuters published a list of initial aid contributors days after the quake, March 30, which included China, India, the United States, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Russia, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

The situation has been so dire that even neighboring nations with complex relations with Myanmar have taken it upon themselves to send in relief and humanitarian aid. Multiple rounds of relief, along with a humanitarian mission, were initiated by Bangladeshi authorities.

According to Bangladesh-based newspaper The Daily Star, two transport aircraft had been sent with 16.5 tons of emergency relief, including dry rations, clean water, oral saline, tents, hygiene products and other essential products to Yangon on March 3.

In a more recent report on Reuters, however, the International



The destroyed Mahamuni Buddha Temple complex in Mandalay, Myanmar, on April 2. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY



Top and above: Collapsed buildings after the earthquake in Mandalay, Myanmar, on March 31.

"I cannot say when or exactly where there can be an earthquake, but I can say there is a looming threat to the region, and we must be prepared."

Md Sakawat Hossain, professor at Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka.

4.3 million people urgently need clean water and sanitation, according to a report released by the United Nations on its website on April 18.

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, or IFRC, said on April 17 it had received "only a fraction of an emergency appeal for 100 million Swiss francs (\$119 million)" to help in the recovery efforts.

Call for support

The amount is "a lot less than expected", Alexander Matheou from the IFRC tells Reuters via video link in Mandalay.

According to a report released by the United Nations on its website on April 18, 4.3 million people urgently need clean water and sanitation.

Malnutrition is a growing concern, particularly among children as food insecurity worsens. Education infrastructure and facilities have also been hit hard. On top of this, the report adds, women and children have become more vulnerable.

Mariko Hall, external relations officer of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, told ANN that 17.2 million people were affected by the earth-

quake. It also reduced homes, hospitals, and schools to rubble, she added, disrupting markets and essential services, including water and sanitation.

For earthquake-affected communities, Hall said the most urgent needs include emergency shelter, core relief items such as solar lamps, tarpaulins, mosquito nets, tents, kitchen sets, and safe drinking water, food, and healthcare.

"Particularly ahead of the monsoon season, with risk of floods and landslides, shelter support is essential so that people have somewhere safe to live," she added.

Given the existing challenges on the ground, compounded by powerful aftershocks and heavy rains, Hall told ANN that to ensure rapid response, they had to reprioritize existing resources and dispatch emergency supplies from Yangon to assist survivors.

Hall said the ability of UNHCR to deliver humanitarian aid and provide protection assistance largely depends on generous donations from individuals and the international community.

"The UNHCR's total funding requirements for Myanmar in 2025 is \$88.3 million to assist displaced people and their host communities," she shared, adding that "As of the end of March, less than 20 percent of funding had been secured."

"At this critical time, the people of Myanmar need the support of the international community more than ever."

Looming threat

With the sudden onset of such a devastating crisis, there have been speculations about whether this earthquake is an indicator of disasters that may recur in the future within the region.

Misinformation on social media has exacerbated the collective panic among people about the possibilities of earthquakes and the authorities' ability to mitigate the impact of such disasters.

In this regard, Hossain told ANN, "Earthquakes are the only natural disasters that cannot be predicted even a few seconds in advance."

There is no way to warn authorities and the public. This region has many large-scale fault lines, of which many are quite active.

"This includes the Sagaing fault which has experienced about nine major earthquakes in the past 100 years, the Chittagong Coastal fault, the Main Frontal Thrust fault, the Dauki fault, the Oldham fault, the Madhupur fault and the Sylhet fault," he said.

Hossain said most of these faults have recurrence intervals between 20 and 30 years and 200 and 500 years. These faults can impact India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan,

Thailand and Myanmar.

"Thus, I cannot say when or exactly where there can be an earthquake, but I can say there is a looming threat to the region, and we must be prepared," he said.

While analyzing the possible risks of major earthquakes in the region, Hossain mentioned that a lot of major cities in South Asia, such as Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Bangkok, Silchar, Kathmandu, Kolkata, and Dhaka, are built on flatlands and soft sediments.

Earthquakes in flatlands and areas with soft sediment, like delta and basin regions, can result in unique and potentially damaging effects, including liquefaction and ground deformation, which increases the odds of higher damages to the region experiencing the earthquake, including possible subsidence and landslides.

Thus, it is crucial for nations, especially those with densely populated areas and cities, to make necessary arrangements to not only prepare for the possibility of an earthquake and mitigate the possible impacts of such disasters, but also to spread awareness to the public about what can be done and how they can be prepared themselves.

"Authorities must increase their knowledge and vigilance over earthquake hazard assessment capacity, and by investing in equipment and stations that would observe overall seismic activities within the region, giving them the scope to collect as much information as possible.

"Reducing vulnerabilities to power, water, gas and telecom networks is also an extremely important step for authorities, as these infrastructures often take the first hit. Investing in rescue equipment is also a must for each nation in this region," Hossain said while highlighting some of the crucial steps required for managing and preparing for the possibility of major earthquakes.

"Policies and building codes must be updated and strictly implemented to ensure proper construction of earthquake-resistant establishments or infrastructures for all new projects. Authorities must also enforce retrofitting and other engineering measures for older constructions and buildings, allowing impending damage to be minimized," he added.

He further mentioned, "There should be campaigns and training available to make people aware of what to do in case of such an emergency, and make it available in all educational institutes, at all levels and capacities, to better understand what the disaster is and how to keep themselves prepared for it."

Japanese consumers turn to rice alternatives in price surge

Soaring rice prices and increased consumer frugality are driving changes in dining habits of Japanese, including adding glutinous barley to rice and switching from rice to alternatives like bread and pasta.

There have also been moves to introduce foreign-grown rice, though it was unpopular at the time of the 1993 rice shortage.

Lawson introduced new varieties of Japanese rice balls *onigiri* using glutinous barley, a type of barley characterized by its sticky, chewy texture when cooked, accompanied by bonito flakes, salmon and tuna mayonnaise, at about 130 Natural Lawson stores in the Tokyo metropolitan area on April 23.

They maintained the price of the new rice balls by using glutinous barley to replace some of the white rice. Glutinous barley is also used along with rice in their bento box.

Glutinous barley takes up more space than rice. While two cups of rice are 300 grams, adding 100 grams of glutinous barley during cooking makes it three cups.

With its high dietary fiber content, glutinous barley had already seen an increase in the number of consumers eating it, but soaring rice prices have drawn even greater attention to it.

Hakubaku, a manufacturer and seller of glutinous barley, reported their monthly year-on-year sales have increased for 11 consecutive months through March. They also increased production by beginning to operate their plant on Saturdays from April 12.

Sales volume changing

According to Japan's agriculture ministry, the average price for a 5-kilogram bag of rice at supermarkets was 4,214 yen (\$29) for the week ending April 6. That's more than double of what shoppers paid during the same period last year.

The soaring price is impacting the lives of consumers, with some turning to alternatives to put food on the table. At a supermarket in Tokyo, a woman in her 70s said she was eating more noodles and less rice.

A mother in her 20s was shopping for her family said since rice was a basic necessity, she hoped the prices would fall soon.

"I've switched to eating only bread for breakfast, and I have pasta for dinner once or twice a week," said a 60-year-old taxi driver from Chiba Prefecture.

Supermarkets are also showing a clear trend toward rice alternatives. According to a February survey by research company TrueData, annual sales volume in grocery supermarkets rose by 24 percent for frozen pizza and gratin and 20 percent for macaroni, compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, rice sales declined by 10 percent.

"Staple food products that serve as alternatives to rice are seeing increased demand," according to the company's analysis.

Imports from overseas are meeting some of the supply shortfall. During the single month of February this year, Japan imported nearly 40 percent of the amount brought in during the entire fiscal year 2023.

In Miyazaki's Kushima City, farmer Mori Michihiro is now exclusively growing table rice. Previously, he allocated 10 percent of his arable land for rice — that would be used in processed foods.

Mori said in an interview with Japanese public broadcaster NHK that the government's long-standing policy to control rice production has had serious consequences.

"Rice prices between the agricultural cooperative and farmers have not risen that much," Mori said. "Farmers are not making money from this situation."

He said soaring fuel and equipment costs have made it hard to make a profit by harvesting rice for dinner tables.

"Many farmers have quit due to old age, so there is a limit to how much production can be expanded," he said. "I don't think output can increase much."

BUSINESS

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More constructive engagement urged

Chamber: Sino-US tariff detente good, but more long-term stability needed

By ZHONG NAN
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With China and the United States agreeing to de-escalate trade tensions, European companies are urging both sides to resolve differences through constructive engagement and refrain from actions that could disrupt global trade and investment activities, said the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China.

While the chamber is encouraged by the tariff adjustment measures announced by China and the US on Monday, uncertainty remains, said Jens Eskelund, president of the Beijing-based chamber.

Eskelund noted that this is partly because certain tariffs have only been suspended for 90 days, and partly because of the erratic nature in which these tariffs were implement-

ed in the first place. Businesses need predictability to maintain normal operations and make investment decisions.

According to a survey released by the EUCCC earlier this month, the unilateral US tariff policy has opened the door for European companies in China to expand their market share at the expense of their US competitors.

The study found that around 13 percent of respondents reported gaining more business from Chinese customers, while another 6 percent said they are attracting increased business from other foreign firms operating in China.

Some 57 percent of respondents stated that they have been unaffected by US tariffs on imports from China. This can be attributed to the "in China, for China" approach that many chamber

members have adopted.

One of these companies is Bosch Group. The German industrial conglomerate said that the impact of tariffs on its business in China has been relatively limited.

Xu Daquan, president of Bosch China, said most of the company's products are locally sourced and manufactured for customers in the Chinese market.

"There are indeed some transactions between Bosch China and Bosch facilities in the US — we import certain components produced by Bosch plants in the US, amounting to roughly 1 billion yuan (\$139 million), and we also export some products to the US, also around 1 billion yuan," said Xu.

Therefore, about 2 billion yuan worth of business is affected, which represents a small proportion of Bosch's total sales revenue of 142.7 billion yuan in China in 2024, reflecting an annual growth rate of 2.7 percent, he added, stressing that as a multinational corporation

with a global business footprint, Bosch can quickly make strategic adjustments when needed.

Ying Pinguang, dean of Shanghai University of International Business and Economics' School of Global Governance, said that if the US continues to impose high tariffs on Chinese goods, many US products — from chemicals and industrial goods to wine and agricultural products — could be priced out of the Chinese market as a result.

Voicing a similar view, Su Qingyi, director of the department of international trade at the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said such a scenario would not only hurt US exporters, but also limit consumer choice in China, potentially prompting Chinese companies and consumers to turn more decisively toward alternative suppliers from Europe and other regions.

Su said high tariffs could accelerate the decoupling trend and under-

mine the global competitiveness of US companies over the long run.

Eager to capture more market share in China, Air Liquide SA, a French industrial and medical gas provider, put a hydrogen energy facility into operation in Shanghai in late March, supporting growing mobility and industrial needs in the Yangtze River Delta region.

The Chinese market is poised for growth, driven by ongoing urbanization, green energy transition, environmental protection efforts and the development of high-end manufacturing, said Rui Coelho, CEO of Air Liquide China.

China's resilient supply chains and advanced infrastructure further support efficient production and logistics, he said.

China's foreign trade with the European Union grew by 1.1 percent to 1.78 trillion yuan in the first four months, while China-US trade declined 2.1 percent year-on-year to 1.44 trillion yuan, said the General Administration of Customs.

Reforms target food delivery platforms

By CHENG YU
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China's top market regulator and four other government authorities have jointly summoned major food delivery platforms and urged them to rectify unfair market practices and better protect the rights of consumers, merchants and delivery staff.

The move comes as JD, known for its e-commerce, has recently expanded into the on-demand delivery sector, intensifying competition with aggressive subsidies and zero-commission policies for select merchants.

The latest meeting, led by the State Administration for Market Regulation, gathered major food delivery platforms including JD, Meituan and Alibaba-backed Ele.me.

Citing prominent problems in the sector's competitive landscape, the meeting called on companies to strictly comply with the country's e-commerce, anti-unfair competition and food safety laws.

Firms were also instructed to strengthen internal compliance, assume greater social responsibility, and engage in fair and orderly market competition.

Li Mingtao, chief e-commerce expert at the China International Electronic Commerce Center, said the meeting represents a proactive step to address early signs of violations and unfair competition in the food delivery sector.

"It sent a clear signal on regulating market behavior and sets an example for fostering a healthier, more orderly platform economy," Li said.

The latest meeting also urged food delivery companies to ensure the legal rights of all stakeholders, particularly consumers and gig workers, for the healthy development of the sector.

Li said that healthy competition will drive the sector and protect the interests of different parties, as can be seen by more players entering the market. Food delivery firms are also starting to compete by demonstrating greater social responsibility, including improving conditions for delivery riders and easing costs for merchants.

"This also bodes well for protecting the rights of gig workers, a group that has long lacked sufficient safeguards. With these delivery drivers getting better conditions, the sector can develop better as well," he added.

Such moves align with the Central Economic Work Conference in December, which explicitly called for systemic regulation of cutthroat competition.

Building upon this move, the 2025 Government Work Report also underscored the removal of market barriers, advocating for strategic actions like eliminating entry and exit obstacles, enhancing factor allocation mechanisms and establishing a unified national market.

Briefly

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Wednesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.86 percent to 3403.95 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.64 percent higher at 10354.22 points.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi strengthened 35 pips to 7.1956 against the US dollar on Wednesday. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan may rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



Export-bound vehicles awaiting shipment in Lianyungang Port, Jiangsu province.

WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Report: Chinese auto sector bright spot amid global woes

By FAN FEIFEI
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China continues to flex its muscles in the global automotive export market, with Russia remaining a stable source of demand for the nation amid the global tariff war affecting the industry, according to a report released by consulting firm AlixPartners.

The report noted that China's auto exports soared 23 percent year-on-year to 6.4 million passenger vehicles in 2024, more than 50 percent above second-ranked Japan, though it expects growth to moderate to 4 percent in 2025 as tariffs ripple through the market.

Russia and the Middle East remain key destinations for Chinese-origin goods and together accounted for 35 percent of exports last year, according to the report, surpassing the combined shipments to Europe and North America for the first time.

It forecast that Chinese brands will account for 30 percent of the global market by 2030, compared with 21 percent last year. The report surveyed hundreds of automotive executives around the world.

"China's car sales to Russia and Belarus have more than doubled over the past five years, insulating it in part from the volatility of tariffs," said Andrew Bergbaum, global leader of automotive and industrial practice at AlixPartners.

The US government imposed a 25 percent tariff on all cars imported into the United States starting April 3, raising concerns from global automakers, auto parts dealers and consumers.

According to the report, although recent tariffs by the US will increase the cost of China's vehicle and auto components exports by about 24 percent, or \$46 billion, this represents only about 3.8 percent of China's total auto industry production value.

Growing exports have been accompanied by continuing growth in the domestic market, which the report forecast will grow by 4 percent year-on-year to 26.8 million vehicles in China in 2025, in sharp contrast to declines in other major markets.

Domestic growth in China is being driven by the rapid adoption of electric vehicles, increasingly with intelligent vehicle features such as autonomous driving systems, said the report, adding that EV sales are forecast to account for 54 percent of the domestic market in 2025.

China's new energy vehicles saw robust production and sales in the first four months of the year. NEV production surged 48.3 percent year-on-year to 4.42 million units in the January-April period, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

During the period, NEV sales soared 46.2 percent year-on-year to 4.3 million units, accounting for 42.7 percent of total new vehicle sales during the period, according to CAAM data.

Zhang Xiang, a visiting professor at the engineering department of Huanghe Science and Technology University, said Chinese auto companies should speed up their globalization plan in emerging markets,

and diversify their business layouts to reduce dependence on a single market and navigate challenges from Washington's tariff hikes.

By establishing production bases and procurement networks in diversified markets, these companies can make better use of local resources to reduce manufacturing costs and optimize the supply chain structure, Zhang noted.

Moreover, the domestic boom in China's electric and intelligent vehicle sales has changed the trajectory of the price war that started in 2023, with financial incentives and new features increasingly replacing discounts on retail prices, the report noted.

"Complementary intelligent driving features are emerging as a key competitive tool, further distinguishing China-brand offerings from overseas ones," said Yvette Zhang, a partner in automotive and industrial practice at AlixPartners.

The report said advanced driver assistance systems that are Level 2 and above were included on almost 60 percent of passenger vehicle sales in China last year, compared with fewer than 40 percent in the US. The penetration rate of these types of features are also set to increase ahead of other regions.

Chinese brands are leveraging unique advantages to pursue faster and cheaper intelligent driving solutions that are good enough to bring to market, and some global automakers are seeking to learn from them through new strategic partnerships, said Stephen Dyer, Asia leader of the automotive and industrial practice at AlixPartners.

Experts: US chip curbs on Huawei doomed to fail

By MA SI
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Washington's latest attempt to ban the use of Huawei Technologies Co's Ascend artificial intelligence chips "anywhere in the world" is an unprecedented government-initiated crackdown on a Chinese private company, experts said.

Such efforts are doomed to fail as China's semiconductor industry, tempered by years of US sanctions, now boasts a near-complete supply chain, and previous Washington restrictions have ironically catalyzed China's progress in chips, they added.

The comments came after the US Commerce Department issued guidance on Tuesday stating that the use of Huawei Technologies Co's Ascend artificial intelligence chips "anywhere in the world" violates the government's export controls, escalating US efforts to curb technological advances in China.

He Hui, semiconductor research director at UK-based tech research company Omdia, said the latest move will accelerate China's efforts to build tech supply chains independent of US technologies.

"Despite the harsh rhetoric from Washington, the rule is more like building an anti-Huawei atmosphere than to really implement it. After all, many Chinese companies are using Huawei's AI chips and what else can the US government do to further punish them, given that most of them have already been put on its blacklist," she said.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association, said the latest move underlines once again that the US government is using all means to contain the rise of Chinese technologies, but such efforts are doomed to fail.

"Previous restrictions ironically

catalyzed China's progress in chips. The latest move will play the same role in helping Huawei emerge stronger," Xiang added.

Wei Shaojun, president of the integrated circuit design branch of the China Semiconductor Industry Association, said: "The more others suppress us, the more we need to be self-reliant. But self-reliance does not mean self-isolation. It is about finding ways to break the containment."

"China needs to promote the re-globalization of the semiconductor industry by achieving self-reliance on crucial technologies as well as by teaming up with countries and enterprises that are willing to cooperate," said Wei.

Many Chinese companies are embracing Huawei's chips for AI training, because Washington bans exports by US companies, such as Nvidia's advanced chips, to China.

China's AI pioneer iFlytek, for instance, has said its proprietary deep reasoning model Spark X1 is the industry's only large language model trained entirely on China's domestic computational infrastructure.

iFlytek said it is partnering with Huawei's AI chip research team to create better domestic computing solutions for AI training, and that Spark X1 demonstrates significant improvements across general AI tasks, including mathematics, coding, logical reasoning, text generation, language understanding and knowledge-based Q&A.

Last month, Nvidia and AMD said they need to follow new US licensing requirements for semiconductor exports to China.

Nvidia anticipates that the new regulations would lead to a \$5.5 billion financial hit, while AMD estimates the rules could reduce its earnings by as much as \$800 million, as reported in filings submitted to the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Enhancing skills



Young employees from State Grid Suguan Power Supply Co's transmission line operation and maintenance center conduct a practice drill cleaning power line insulators with a drone, combining classroom learning with on-site practice. Since last year, the company has been committed to building a youth-oriented enterprise, helping youngsters to thrive in their careers with the right skills. WU DI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

E-commerce platforms eye more opportunities

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese e-commerce platforms are ramping up efforts to march into Latin America to cultivate new customers and rev up sales, as cross-border online marketplaces turn into important driving forces bolstering the growth of China's foreign trade amid external uncertainties.

Eyeing the enormous development potential of the Latin American e-commerce market, Chinese online retailers are providing value-for-money products to local consumers by leveraging efficient supply chain networks, and contributing to economic and trade cooperation between China and Latin America, experts said.

Temu, a cross-border e-commerce app owned by Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings, has made forays into Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Uruguay, Ecuador, Dominica and Panama. To attract price-conscious consumers in the region, Temu offers an array of favorable policies including shopping discounts and coupons, as well as fast delivery services.

Chen Lei, chairman and co-CEO of PDD Holdings, said the company hopes to leverage the supply chain capacities it has accumulated to create a new channel that enables consumers from different countries and regions to directly purchase products from factories, providing more flexible and personalized supply chains and more cost-effective shopping experiences.

Launched in September 2022, Temu offers a wide selection of merchandise, including apparel, consumer electronics, jewelry, shoes, cosmetics and baby products at competitive prices. Most of these products are shipped directly from factories or warehouses in China.

As of January, the app's monthly active users reached 39 million in Brazil, making Temu the second-largest e-commerce platform in the country, while it has quickly become one of the most downloaded online shopping apps in Mexico since its debut in the country in 2023.

According to global research firm Statista, the number of e-commerce users in Latin America stood at 290 million in 2024, and this is expected to rise by 52 percent to more than 400 million by 2029.

The consultancy said Latin America's e-commerce sector will see an upward trajectory fueled by digitalization, improved logistics and infrastructure, and the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology reshaping online shopping worldwide.

TikTok Shop, the e-commerce marketplace of popular short-video app TikTok, which is owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance, recently launched services in Brazil, marking a significant step in the company's expansion in the Latin American market. The platform entered the Mexican market in January.

Consumers can find and directly buy products featured in livestreaming broadcasts and short

“Latin America presents immense opportunities for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms aspiring to expand their footprint globally ...”

Chen Tao, analyst at internet consultancy Analysys

videos without leaving the platform. TikTok Shop will empower local sellers from all regions of Brazil, helping them grow by connecting their products to a large audience and handling order fulfillment in partnership with logistics providers in Brazil.

Market consultancy Mordor Intelligence predicts that the size of Brazil's e-commerce sector will rise from \$52.87 billion last year to \$125.68 billion in 2029, with a compound annual growth rate of 18.91 percent between 2024 and 2029. Brazil and Mexico together represent approximately two-thirds of the e-commerce market share in Latin America.

Mexico is the second-largest e-commerce market in Latin America, with its market scale expected to reach \$53.97 billion by 2029, growing at a CAGR of 13.27 percent, it added.

Online fast-fashion retailer Shein has announced that it would initially invest \$150 million to establish a network with thousands of textile manufacturers in Brazil, which is expected to become a manufacturing and export hub for the rest of Latin America. It plans to partner with 2,000 local manufacturers, creating around 100,000 new jobs over the next three years.

The investment would be used to provide tools and training in factories to upgrade traditional operations to match Shein's on-demand production model. By the end of 2026, local manufacturers and vendors are expected to account for almost 85 percent of all transactions made in Brazil, according to Shein.

“Latin America presents immense opportunities for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms aspiring to expand their footprint globally, thanks to the increasing penetration rate of internet and smartphone use, gradually improved logistics networks and the adoption of digital payment systems in the region,” said Chen Tao, an analyst at the Beijing-based internet consultancy Analysys.

Chen estimates that the e-commerce industry in Peru, Colombia, Argentina and Chile will maintain double-digit growth rates in the next few years.

The younger generation prefers to buy commodities like apparel, smartphones, headphones and smartwatches online and is driving the development of e-commerce in Latin American countries, Chen added.



A farmer sieves coffee cherries at a plantation in Braganca Paulista, Brazil, on April 4. ANDRE PENNER / AP PHOTO

China, LatAm brewing stronger coffee biz ties

Major beverage chains savoring world-renowned Brazilian beans

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Agricultural trade and economic ties between China and Latin American countries are deepening, exemplified by Chinese tea and ice cream chain Mixue Group's 4-billion-yuan (\$555.4 million) deal with a Brazilian business on Monday.

Industry leaders and experts also said they see vast potential for high-value, sustainable cooperation, as closer trade continues to bring a broader range of quality produce to Chinese consumers and enrich the country's dining tables.

An MoU was signed on Monday between Mixue and Brazilian trade and investment promotion agency ApexBrasil to deepen cooperation in agricultural trade and accelerate the former's market entry into the South American country.

Under the agreement, Mixue will expand the use of Brazilian agricultural products in its global supply chain, such as coffee beans and fruit products, and ApexBrasil will provide support for the company's business operations and retail expansion in Brazil.

Mixue plans to invest no less than 4 billion yuan in sourcing agricultural products, primarily coffee beans, from Brazil over the next three to five years.

The initiative is expected to create around 25,000 jobs in Brazil. Mixue will also open its first store in Brazil this year and begin construction of a local supply chain facility to establish a production and sales model.

Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, plays a major part in China's agricultural imports. Coffee has become a key component of Sino-

Brazilian trade, particularly amid the rising popularity of ready-to-drink coffee in China.

Brazil's coffee exports to China have seen particularly strong momentum. The Brazilian Coffee Exporters Council said Brazilian coffee exports to China surged 186.1 percent year-on-year in the 2023-24 crop year to reach 1.64 million 60 kilogram-bags — the fastest growth among all destination markets — while overall coffee exports from Brazil rose 32.7 percent to a new record high.

“Latin American coffee — particularly Brazilian beans — is showing strong growth potential in the Chinese market,” said Roolee Lu, director of food and drink, and food services, Mintel China. “As Chinese consumers become more sophisticated in their coffee preferences, quality is taking precedence. At the same time as more brands adopt low-price strategies, Brazilian beans are one of the emerging popular choices that strike a balance between convenience, quality and affordability. Overall, Latin American coffee is gaining wider recognition in China for its value and improving quality.”

Surging demand for the beans comes from the up-scaling of global operations for Mixue, which launched its ground coffee brand in 2017. The company, which currently operates more than 46,000 stores globally — including over 5,000 across 12 overseas markets — began international expansion with its first store in 2018 in Vietnam.

In addition, Guo Jinyi, co-founder and CEO of Luckin Coffee, said while attending the China-Brazil Business Seminar in Beijing on

Monday that the coffee house is promoting Brazilian coffee culture in China.

Luckin Coffee, which had already signed a cooperation memorandum with ApexBrasil in November, plans to purchase 240,000 metric tons of Brazilian coffee beans worth 10 billion yuan in the 2025-29 period — the largest procurement plan by the company so far.

“Brazil is a major agricultural powerhouse, and our collaboration reflects the strong complementarity between Chinese demand and Brazilian supply,” Guo said. “We aim to introduce high-quality Brazilian coffee to our 355 million users and build Luckin Coffee into a platform for Sino-Brazilian cultural exchange.”

Bilateral trade between China and Latin America continues to grow steadily. According to the General Administration of Customs, trade between the two sides reached \$518.47 billion in 2024, a 6 percent year-on-year increase. Imports from Latin America surged 46 percent over the past five years to \$241.3 billion, reflecting China's rising demand for high-quality, value-added goods.

Latin American agricultural products are increasingly present on Chinese dining tables. Imports of Chilean cherries, Ecuadorian bananas, Nicaraguan honey and Honduran white shrimp have surged in recent years.

During the recent Spring Festival, a period noted for increased fruit consumption and a tradition of gifting cherries, high-end cherry varieties from Chile saw record sales in China. Chile has become China's second-largest supplier of fresh fruits. According to ProChile's data, cherry exports for 2024 totaled \$3.09 billion, with more than 90 percent destined for the Chinese market.

2nd railway to Mongolia commences construction

By ZHENG XIN
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China and Mongolia have started building a new cross-border railway line, according to an announcement by China Energy Investment Corp (CHN Energy) on Wednesday, which experts anticipate will be a major route for energy cooperation between the two countries.

The railway's section in China is shouldered by CHN Energy, the country's largest coal-fired power generator by capacity. It is planned to be finished by 2027.

This is the second railway line built between China and Mongolia after the first one that was completed in 1956, it said.

It is expected that the commissioning of the new railway would create an opportunity for increased coal exports from Mongolia to China and would boost the GDP per capita.

The new railway is expected to carry about 30 million metric tons of cargo each year and will greatly improve connectivity between the two nations. It will help make the movement of minerals and energy resources more efficient, said Wang Shangjun, chairman of the railway company responsible for the project under CHN Energy.

The project is also important for boosting overall economic cooperation and enhancing cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, which is aimed at improving infrastructure connectivity and promoting common prosperity, he said.

The new line will connect with China's existing Ganqimaodu-Wanshuiquan railway, which is already operating. This link will join China's rail network with Mongolia's southern railway system.

According to analysts from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Mongolia's coal export revenue declined in 2024 due to falling export prices, despite a record-high production volume.

Analysts believe the railway project is a joint effort between China and Mongolia.

The new railway is a major step for China-Mongolia trade, which will significantly increase the amount of energy and resources traded between the two countries, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

He also pointed out that the railway will improve infrastructure links, boosting overall economic and trade activity in the areas along the railway line.

The project is expected to help upgrade related businesses, such as cross-border logistics, industrial parks near the border, and border trade services, he said.

“Opening a new chapter for China-Mongolia relations, the project will lead to more integrated development and mutually beneficial trade between the two nations.”

Aerospace industrial park expanding in Jiangsu

By ZHUANG QIANGE
and PANG BO

On the northern flank of the Yangtze River Delta, a grand aerospace industrial park is expanding in the county-level city of Jingjiang in Jiangsu province, as part of a planned 10-billion-yuan (\$1.38 billion) aerospace cluster.

This industry cluster under the prefecture-level city of Taizhou has made contributions to China's monumental aerospace achievements — from the Shenzhou spacecraft to the C919 aircraft, and from the Tiangong space station to the Tianwen Mars mission.

The nationally influential park, covering some 1,000 mu (66.7 hectares), constitutes a full industry chain covering engine manufacturing, precision components and equipment testing, and can produce 600 reusable 100-metric-ton-thrust liquid oxygen-kerosene

66.7 hectares

coverage area of the aerospace industrial park in Jingjiang, Jiangsu province

rocket engines each year.

Since the park's establishment in 2006, State Grid Taizhou Power Supply Co has actively participated in providing the facility's electricity needs.

“State Grid Taizhou is the solid backbone of our development,” said Wang Shaobin, director of the administrative committee of the Jingjiang Economic and Technological Development Zone. “Its premium power services are vital for attracting investment and ensuring their operations.”

Today, the development zone, which houses the aerospace park, operates three 220 kilovolt sub-

stations and four 110 kV substations, providing robust power support for its industrial growth.

Qin Chunfang, a manager at State Grid Taizhou, said the power supplier has taken a three-pronged approach to bolster the park's green growth — offering tailored power services, designating dedicated service managers and providing a reliable power supply.

In response to China's carbon peak and neutrality goals, State Grid Taizhou has developed tailored green transition plans for the enterprises.

At GKN Aerospace Components (Jiangning) Co Ltd, the company replaced water-cooled HVAC systems with energy-saving ventilation systems in production facilities following the power supplier's recommendations, slashing power consumption by over 35 percent.

Jiangsu Aerospace Power Manu-

facturing Co Ltd linked its 11.48 megawatt photovoltaic project to the grid in October 2024, generating 7 million kilowatt-hours annually.

“After installing photovoltaics, we can save up to 4 million yuan in annual costs,” said Ma Kai, company manager.

Meanwhile, dedicated service managers have also become “trusted guardians” for enterprises' power needs.

At Jiangsu Donghua Testing Technology Co Ltd, established in 1993, power manager Qin Chunfang helped detect temperature discrepancies in a dedicated transformer's bushings, a flaw that could have caused a power outage during a routine visit in March 2024.

In addition, State Grid Taizhou's stable and reliable power supply has injected vigorous momentum into the cluster's progress.

In May 2006, a 220 kV industrial



Technicians operate equipment at a facility in the aerospace industrial park in Jingjiang, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

park substation commenced operations. By 2008, three additional 110 kV transmission lines were added, doubling total capacity. And in December 2023, four grid

enhancement projects completed comprehensive upgrades.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

Train projects reshape South China regions

Rail network boon for goods transport, job prospects, tourism

By TAN GUOLING
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Liang Jieli, a tour guide in Rongxian county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, for seven years, said she has never been to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area even though it is so near and well known.

Guiding a group of visitors touring Zhenwu Pavilion — an ancient wood-framed facility dubbed “outstanding structure of the South” as a national treasure in Rongxian county, Liang said she is hoping to visit the area after a new high-speed railway traversing her hometown opens in 2027.

State builders are helping construct the new 648-kilometer Nanning-Zhuhai HSR, which runs for 304 km in Guangxi and 344 km in neighboring Guangdong province, with a designed speed of 350 km per hour for the trains, cutting the travel time on an existing HSR from 3.5 hours to 2.5 hours.

The railway connects Nanning, Yulin, Cenxi, the Pearl River Delta hub airport, Jiangmen, Zhuhai and Shenzhen. The current route to Shenzhen has to transit from Guangzhou — the provincial capital — and only allows trains to run 250 km/h.

Yang Jin, a tourist from Shenzhen, was visiting Zhenwu Pavilion under the prefecture-level city of Yulin with 44 others in a tour group. He said they spent nearly four hours on the current HSR, and after seeing the pavilion, they hoped to visit Yuntian Palace — a massive structure incorporating traditional Chinese culture with modern architectural styles — in the city proper of Yulin.

Yang said both Guangxi and Guangdong have plenty of natural resources and rich sightseeing spots. The new railway can boost two-way passenger flow, especially on weekends.

Wang Wei, a staff member from Fifth Engineering Co Ltd of China Railway No 4 Engineering Group, which is building two bids on the Yulin-Cenxi section, said he is proud of taking part in constructing the new Nanning-Zhuhai HSR that will have 18 stations.

“We can view this new railway from a strategic point of view,” he said, noting that the new HSR can better link the Guangxi Beibu Gulf Economic Zone with the GBA and is dubbed Guangxi’s No 1 infrastructure project to fully integrate into the GBA.

While the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone covers six cities — Nanning, Beihai, Qinzhou, Fangchenggang, Yulin and Chongzuo — in Guangxi, the GBA covers the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, and nine cities in Guangdong: Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan,

Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing.

With the new railway, Guangxi’s goods — such as minerals, wooden products, agricultural and sideline products — can quickly reach the 1 trillion yuan (\$138.8 billion) strong consumer market in the GBA, Wang said.

Besides the new Nanning-Zhuhai HSR, Guangxi is also building a 237.8-km-long Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway, also known as the Liuzhou-Wuzhou section of the Liuzhou-Guangzhou Railway, which can transport both goods and passengers and allows trains to run at around 160 km/h upon its expected launch in 2026.

As a major engineering project of the country’s 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), the railway can also be a main channel for goods from Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces and Chongqing municipality to reach the GBA faster, said Hu Feiyu, office director of the CREC4 project department for building the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway.

CREC4 is helping build the railway’s No 3 bid section with a total length of 27,722 km, worth some 2.176 billion yuan, Hu said.

As for the sugar sector, Guangxi’s high-quality white sugar can more quickly enter the food industry cluster in the GBA, and by-products such as molasses can be supplied to biochemical enterprises in the Pearl River Delta region, elevating Guangxi’s sugar sector higher up the value chain, Hu added.

At the same time, a wood deep-processing industry belt along the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway can emerge using local lumber and wood products, helping create industrial agglomeration, he said.

In addition, with improved railway transport, minerals such as limestone and marble in Wuxuan county under the prefecture-level city of Laibin can also utilize advanced processing technology in Guangdong, enhancing market competitiveness.

For agricultural and related products in Guangxi, persimmon and oranges from Wuxuan usually take over eight hours to reach Guangzhou via road transport, with a damage rate of up to 15 percent. The new railway can shorten the travel time to five hours and reduce the loss rate to less than 5 percent, said Hu.

Besides enhancing traffic flow, building railways is also helping cultivate more skilled technicians and managerial staff members, Wang from CREC4 Fifth Engineering said.

Wu Can, manager of CREC4’s prefabricated beams yard in Wuxuan working on the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway, is proud of his own growth.

“When I first took over the beam yard in December 2022, I felt a bit uneasy in front of this ‘behemoth’ covering seven hectares, but soon I saw a huge leap in my professional abilities,” Wu said, noting that his work on site planning, equipment debugging, raw materials control and finished beam maintenance



Top: A drone photo shows an automated container terminal in Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in December.

Above: Workers monitor the auto-feeding of steel bars on a shutter production line at the prefabricated components smart center of China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd in Hefei, Anhui province, on Monday.

LIU JIAXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

nance has let him accumulate valuable practical experience in every step.

Located in Ertang town, the yard has a mixing plant, steel bar distribution center, beam making area, beam storage area, beam lifting area and an office area, and is scheduled to prefabricate 2,228 T-shaped beams between Nov 1, 2023 and June 10 this year.

Liu Di, deputy chief engineer of CREC4’s prefabricated components smart center for the No 3 bid of Yulin-Cenxi section on the Nanning-Zhuhai HSR, is jubilant to see more new technologies being adopted by CREC4 in building the two new railways.

Liu said as this is the first time

CREC4 has introduced an intelligent production line for the prefabrication of such small components. When the yard was completed on Aug 8, 2023, it became the country’s largest and most intelligent such center at the time and began production on Aug 13.

“The center is responsible for the prefabrication of precast concrete components for all five bids of the Yulin-Cenxi section of the Nanning-Zhuhai HSR, including 61,043 roadbed protective fences, 6,092 pile retaining plates, 443,802 hollow bricks, 24,204 cable troughs, 76,080 cable-trough covers, 390,344 bridge cover plates, 50,238 shutters and 438,377

pieces of tunnel covers,” he said.

“Our precast concrete component requires some 55,987 cubic meters of concrete, which can fill 22 Olympic-sized swimming pools (each measuring 50 meters in length, 25 meters in width and two meters in depth, covering some 2,500 cubic meters), while our steel reinforcement used is about 8,614.2 metric tons — equivalent to the weight of over 5,700 family cars stacked together,” he said.

Chen Shangjie, a CREC4 staff member, said they have successfully completed the pouring of all pile foundations for the No 3 bid of the Yulin-Cenxi section after the last one was poured on May 7, marking a new milestone in their engineering work.

Compared to highways, railway transport has significant cost advantages and is particularly suitable for the transport of bulk goods, said Li Xiaoyan, a publicity staff member from CREC4 Fifth Engineering.

With the future operations of the two new railways, the link between the Guangxi Beibu Gulf Economic Zone and the GBA can be effectively enhanced, Li said.

On Jan 16, 2008, the country proposed to build the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone in Guangxi into an important international regional economic cooperation zone, and this is the first such zone in China.

“As Guangxi is a gateway to enter the markets of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states, I can foresee an enhanced traffic flow from the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone and the GBA to ASEAN economies. There will be a bright future for both the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone and the GBA,” she said.

By TAN GUOLING

Wen Huaxin, an army veteran who retired in 2018, decided to take on a new job in January 2023 when he learned a new railway was to be built in his hometown in Wuxuan county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Before that, he was a police assistant from April 2019 at the public security bureau in the county administered by the prefecture-level city of Laibin.

State builders from Fifth Engineering Co Ltd of China Railway No 4 Engineering Group are helping construct the 237.8-kilometer Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway that passes by Wen’s hometown of Ertang town in Wuxuan, with construction having started in October 2022.

In January 2023, Wen was welcomed to CREC4’s project team, working at the third working section’s material and machinery unit.

“The job was a leap for me, as CREC4 offered me a monthly salary exceeding 7,000 yuan (\$972) while most locals can only earn between 2,000 and 3,000 yuan each month, elevating me to a high-income earner, and largely improving my family’s financial situation,” he said.

“When the railway begins operations — expected in 2026 — our travel

will be much easier, as the new railway station is about 10 minutes away from my home by car and it only takes 30 minutes to reach the prefecture-level city of Liuzhou by train,” he said, adding that previously, a trip to Liuzhou and Laibin on an inter-county bus could take three to four hours.

“As a construction worker helping to build a railway in my hometown, I have been trying to develop various skills needed for my job,” he said, noting that the work has boosted his skill sets and heightened his confidence in future construction work.

Wen said he feels extremely honored to have become a builder who can contribute to the economic and social development in his hometown, as trains on the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway can transport both goods and passengers.

With the new railway being built, many new factories and logistics parks have opened along its route, providing more opportunities for locals to work near home,” Wen said, affirming that in the future, the new railway will bring more tourists to his hometown

Railways benefit diverse groups



Employees at work inside the Shuangfeng tunnel at the construction site of the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on March 27. HE HUAWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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As a construction worker helping to build a railway in my hometown, I have been trying to develop various skills needed for my job.”

Wen Huaxin, army veteran who now works in CREC4’s Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway project team

while enhancing the flow of goods.

Yu Enfu, a driver for the CREC4 project department for the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway, is from the prefecture-level city of Baise in Guangxi.

Yu said he is in urgent need of funds to support his family with three children — two attending college and one in elementary school.

As a team member of the CREC4 project department, his food and accommodation expenses are being covered, and his monthly salary can be saved and sent back to his wife, making the family income much more stable.

“If I look for a job at home, the monthly salary can be quite low and unpredictable,” he said, adding that if any urgent family issue demands his attention, he can rush back within half a day.

“My family is very happy with my work helping build a railway,” Yu said.

Besides the Liuzhou-Wuzhou Railway, CREC4 is also helping construct a 648-km Nanning-Zhuhai HSR, which runs for 304 km in Guangxi and 344 km in neighboring Guangdong province, with a

designed speed of 350 km per hour for the trains.

Wang Wei, office director of the CREC4 project department, said ever since he entered the construction site in October 2022, the department has spent over 10 million yuan purchasing local vegetables, fruits and other goods, as well as daily necessities through targeted procurements.

Wang’s project department is stationed in Rongxian county of Yulin, bordering the prefecture-level city of Wuzhou that administers Cenxi county.

“To help the residents in Guangxi, we have hired over 1,500 locals for more than 1,000 positions requiring different skills, providing them with salaries exceeding 33 million yuan,” Wang said.

“We intend to help them achieve both skills improvement and household income growth, as a way to aid local rural vitalization,” he said.

The positions can help offer sustainable jobs for locals, forming full-cycle support through a mode of “construction period employment and operation period positions”, Wang said, adding that this can effectively transform an infrastructure construction project into a long-term platform that benefits locals.

COMMENT

Editorials Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

US should cease measures aimed at curbing China's high-tech progress

The opportunity to stabilize bilateral economic and trade relations risks being squandered by the US, which took new measures on Wednesday to try and prevent other countries from dealing with China in the artificial intelligence semiconductor sector.

In a bid to strengthen its long-term containment of China's development in the high-tech field, the US Department of Commerce has revoked the AI proliferation rules of the previous Joe Biden administration and started implementing additional measures to strengthen export controls on AI chips.

The Biden administration released the AI proliferation rules in January, and its compliance requirements were originally scheduled to take effect on Thursday. These rules divided the world into three tiers: The first tier would enjoy free trade of AI chips with the US, although under US supervision. This tier included 18 US allies. The second tier of approximately 120 economies was subject to certain restrictive policies. While the third tier, which included the Chinese mainland, Russia and Iran, among a few other economies, was prohibited from obtaining advanced chips.

These rules were already highly discriminatory and damaging to the industry, and they faced strong opposition both at home and overseas, including from some US allies, as they would serve to block the rest of the world's development of AI technology, turning advancements in the technology into a privilege of the US.

In scrapping the rules, the incumbent US administration claimed they would stifle innovation in the US and impose onerous new regulatory requirements on enterprises, as well as damage the relations of the US with dozens of countries. But these are only excuses so that it can overcome the opposition of US companies to the new restrictions.

According to the guidelines issued by the Commerce Department on Tuesday, the use of Huawei's Ascend AI chip anywhere in the world violates US export controls, a move aimed at coercing other economies from dealing with the Chinese company that leads China's research and innovation in the AI sector.

NVIDIA founder and CEO Jensen Huang told US media earlier this month that China's AI market could reach about \$50 billion in the next two to three years, and emphasized that if US companies miss out on the market due to policy constraints, they will face multiple shocks such as revenue loss and job losses.

To overcome the strong opposition of US companies, the department said it will tell them how to protect their supply chains from the impact of the latest China-targeted policy.

What the US administration fails to appreciate is that it is the US' China-containment strategy in the high tech sector that has prompted the country to realize self-reliance in this key technology.

When asked about China's progress in the AI sector in an interview with US media that aired on Monday, Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, said the technological blockade imposed by the US on China has had completely the opposite effect to the one intended. Not only has it failed to restrain China's technological development, but it has also enabled China to achieve full-speed development in fields such as chip manufacturing. Gates said that with open source software now widespread, it is basically difficult for the US administration to curb China's development in related fields.

If the US really recognizes the importance of the bilateral economic and trade relationship to both countries and the global economy as it says, it should stop saying one thing and doing another.

As Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu said in a speech to the opening ceremony of the Second Workshop on AI Capacity Building in Beijing on Monday, China advocates fair and inclusive development of AI, and acts as an active champion, practitioner and pioneer of international cooperation in AI capacity-building. It believes that digital dividends should not be the preserve of a digital hegemony, and intelligent revolution should not expand the digital divide. As two leaders in the field, the US should work with China to ensure the development of AI is safe and a boon for the world.

Although it takes two to tango, it only takes one to make a misstep that could create a disaster.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

High-quality development helps counter external uncertainties

Despite mounting global trade uncertainties, China's foreign trade has demonstrated remarkable resilience, with exports posting stronger-than-expected growth in April. The latest customs data show that China's goods trade expanded by 2.4 percent year-on-year in the first four months of 2025, with exports surging 7.5 percent.

The outstanding performance came despite the escalating tariffs imposed on Chinese imports by the United States, which had threatened to dampen China's trade outlook. In April alone, exports rose by an impressive 9.3 percent, defying market expectations and underscoring the effectiveness of China's diversified trade strategy. Notably, exports to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union, China's top two trading partners, grew by 12.6 percent and 6.1 percent, respectively, offsetting the decline in US-bound exports, which edged down 1.5 percent year-on-year.

The resilience of China's export sector can be attributed to several factors. The first is the market diversification. While US tariffs banked on bilateral trade, China's deepening ties with ASEAN, the European Union and Belt and Road partners helped sustain growth. Trade with ASEAN alone jumped 9.2 percent in the first four months.

The second is high-tech and green exports. Shipments of high-tech products, including semiconductors, industrial robots and new energy vehicles,

remained strong.

The third is private sector vitality. Private enterprises, which account for 56.9 percent of total trade, have been the backbone of China's export resilience, with their shipments growing 6.8 percent year-on-year.

The recent breakthrough in China-US trade talks has further brightened the outlook. A significant reduction in tariffs on both sides provides much-needed relief for businesses in the two countries. In fact, the National Financial Regulatory Administration has announced a range of initiatives to support enterprises severely affected by the US tariffs, including strengthening financial relief and boosting export stability.

This deal is particularly crucial for China's semiconductor and electronics sectors, which had faced steep US levies. With tariffs on key tech products now eased, Chinese manufacturers can regain some cost advantages, while US companies benefit from lower input prices. However, experts caution that the truce remains fragile and long-term stability will depend on further negotiations, the possibility of loosening technology export controls, and how domestic semiconductor companies can optimize supply chain layouts while mitigating risks.

Looking ahead, China's ability to maintain its trade resilience will hinge on continued policy agility and industrial transformation. The government has already rolled out measures to

support exporters through tax rebates, financial aid and enhanced cross-border e-commerce infrastructure. Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of China's green and digital economies, evidenced by booming sales of new energy vehicles and high-tech exports, offers new growth avenues.

Data released by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers on Monday show that the country's automobile production and sales have historically surpassed 10 million units in the first four months of this year. China shipped 1.937 million vehicles from January to April, up 6 percent year-on-year. Of these, NEV exports reached 642,000 units, surging by 52.6 percent year-on-year.

Scientific macro-regulation and effective governance are the very foundations of China's confidence in tackling various risks and challenges. When the "visible hand" of government synergizes with the "invisible hand" of the market, China creates new possibilities for high-quality development.

By leveraging the strategic guidance of national development plans, improving policy coordination mechanisms, and enhancing the foresight, precision, and effectiveness of macro-control measures, the country can achieve dynamic equilibrium across multiple objectives. This demonstrates China's full capability to counter external uncertainties with the certainty of high-quality development.

—ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Humanitarian crisis in Gaza must end

Gaza has become a living hell for the civilian population. As the occupying power, Israel must fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law by immediately lifting its blockade and restoring full access to supplies. This was the latest call by Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, for urgent actions to bring an end to the humanitarian tragedy in the Palestinian enclave.

Speaking at a UN Security Council briefing on the humanitarian situation in Gaza on Tuesday, Fu said that humanitarian assistance must not be weaponized.

The continued blockade of humanitarian aid into Gaza for almost three months by Israel is putting about 2 million Palestinians at critical risk of famine and extreme levels of food insecurity, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

According to the latest report released on Monday by the multi-stakeholder global initiative aimed at enhancing food security and nutrition analysis, 1.95 million people, or 93 percent of Gaza's population, are enduring high levels of acute food insecurity, including 244,000 experiencing "catastrophic" levels, and nearly one in five facing starvation.

Even some Israeli military officials have privately concluded that Palestinians in Gaza face widespread starvation unless aid deliveries are restored within weeks, according to reports.

Israeli officials have proposed that private organizations distribute food from a handful of sites in Gaza, which would each serve several hundred thousand civilians.

But that plan has been dismissed by aid agencies, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which said it would not join the initiative because it would place civilians at greater risk.

The UN warned that the plan would force civilians to regularly pass through Israeli military lines, putting them at greater risk of detention and interrogation. It added that the plan

would accelerate the displacement of civilians from northern Gaza, because the distribution centers were expected to be located far away in the south of the territory.

Israeli officials confirmed that the plan, if enacted, would help the military to intercept Hamas militants and move civilians from northern to southern Gaza. But they said the aim was not to increase civilian hardship but to separate civilians from Hamas fighters.

US President Donald Trump is now on a visit to the Middle East. As the country with the most influence on Israel, it should uphold a fair and responsible attitude and use its leverage to pressure Israel into lifting its blockade or else making a deal with the UN to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza and ensure its distribution as early as possible to ease the humanitarian crisis.

For Israel, its blockade of humanitarian assistance is an instance of the ends justifying the means, and there is no sign that it is likely to ease its blockade.

Instead, it has vowed to dramatically expand the war in Gaza to destroy Hamas and bring back the remaining hostages — twin aims that more than 19 months of war have yet to achieve.

On Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was defiant, and said the military would resume fighting in the coming days "in full force to finish the job" and "eliminate Hamas".

Prolonging the fighting will only lead to more deaths and the worsening of the humanitarian crisis. Gaza has become the most dangerous place for humanitarian workers, with more than 400 humanitarian workers killed in the current conflict. China urges Israel to immediately cease its military attacks in Gaza.

The war against Hamas is one thing, humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in Gaza another. Both Hamas and Israel should be aware that it is wrong for either side to take Palestinian civilians in Gaza as hostages for their political and military purposes.

What They Say

Sign of Global South's coming of age

When the world reaches a crossroad, it is often the choices of major powers that determine the course of history. It was like this 80 years ago, and it is still the case today.

The visit of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to China not only has practical significance for consolidating bilateral relations, but also strengthens the determination of all countries, especially those of the Global South, to defend the fair and just world order and adhere to the path of independent development.

The China-CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum, which was held during Lula's visit to China, has deepened the strategic alignment of development between China and Latin American countries on a larger scale. The China-LAC action plan on cooperation in key areas (2025-27) released on Tuesday serves to add flesh to the bones of their joint declaration issued on the same day.

In a sense, China and Brazil have joined hands to drive the strengthening of unity and cooperation among countries of the Global South, and have deepened and solidified the cooperation between China and Latin American economies.

As an epitome of China's cooperation with the Global South, the cooperation between China and Brazil is gradually expanding from fields such as infrastructure, agriculture and energy to new areas such as the energy transition, aerospace, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, injecting new vitality into the development

of bilateral relations and bringing more tangible benefits to the people of both countries.

All the countries of the Global South that cooperate with China should have a common feeling that China sincerely hopes to promote the common development with them, and it is thus sharing its scientific and technological achievements, development experiences and growth opportunities with them.

China and the LAC countries refuse camp confrontation and advocate for openness and win-win results, setting a new model for international relations.

As major developing countries in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres respectively, China and Brazil will enhance their coordination and cooperation in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations, BRICS, and the China-CELAC Forum, jointly adhere to multilateralism, improve global governance, maintain the international economic and trade order, and oppose unilateralism, protectionism and bullying.

The joint statement signed by the two countries on the Ukraine crisis is built on their previous pro-peace efforts with other developing countries. It indicates that the Global South is playing an increasingly important role in addressing international hot issues.

Among the 20 cooperation documents signed by the two countries on Tuesday, it is particularly worth noting that the People's Bank of China and the central bank of Brazil renewed a bilateral currency swap agreement

with a total value of 190 billion yuan (\$26.39 billion). The agreement is valid for a period of five years and can be renewed upon mutual consent.

In 2013, China and Brazil signed their first bilateral local currency swap agreement. The renewal of the agreement will help deepen trade exchanges between the two countries and promote the use of the RMB in Brazil and Latin America. The bilateral local currency swap agreement is an important part of the global financial safety net. Especially against the backdrop of the recent implementation of "reciprocal tariffs" by the United States, the strengthening of currency cooperation between China and Brazil will send a positive signal to the market that the two countries are working together and cooperating in unity, which is conducive to enhancing market confidence and maintaining regional and global financial stability.

Financial cooperation between China and Brazil will help promote reform of the international monetary system, improve global financial governance and strengthen the development financing agenda.

This marks a new stage of mutually beneficial, efficient and pragmatic financial strategic cooperation between China and Brazil. It will provide more efficient and secure financial service guarantees for enterprises of the two countries, and offer financial support for the alignment of development strategies between China and Brazil.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

COMMENT

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

L. America needs right choice amid turmoil

The vast majority of Latin American countries have surpassed two centuries of existence as republics. But no country in the region has developed to the level of being on par with developed nations.

The end of World War II in 1945 saw the reconfiguration of the world order in terms of political and international economic relations. In July 1944, just before World War II ended, the Bretton Woods Conference bequeathed the world two key institutions to help develop the global economy: the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The year 1947 saw the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (which was succeeded by the World Trade Organization in 1995). These fundamental institutions were promoted by the United States, supposedly the champion of freedom and free trade.

Simultaneously, illustrious economists such as Friedrich Hayek (Economics Nobel Prize winner in 1974) and Milton Friedman (Economics Nobel Prize winner in 1976) promoted the liberal theory, baptized as neoliberal or capitalist mode of production, in the West. However, socialist countries would follow their own path of development.

In this context, starting in 1947, the

economic theory of import substitution industrialization (ISI) promoted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, a United Nations body, gained relevance. The objective and strategy of ISI was to reduce dependence on imported goods by promoting local production through the implementation of tariff protection measures to safeguard national industries, boost fiscal incentives, and increase state support. Protectionism, in other words.

Import substitution industrialization generated much enthusiasm in the region, with countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico applying the policy between 1950 and 1970. By the end of the 1980s, ISI proved a failure because it led to excessive protection of national industries, lack of competition and low production quality.

Latin America had lost valuable time in its pursuit of development. Despite some positive aspects remaining, it was necessary to start anew. Those were times of economic chaos, inflation, huge external debt and poverty. In the late 1970s, China made a radical shift in its development policy and began building what is today the world's second-largest economy.

While the US had other priorities in other areas of the world, Latin America sought investments and partners to generate wealth that would allow it to improve its situation. The 1990s were crucial, as the countries of the region again decided to build a better future.

Countries such as Peru began to dismantle the old state-owned enterprises, privatizing assets in all sectors (mining, communications and services) with marked success. The first decade of this century was particularly important because it marked China's decisive presence in Latin America. China signed free trade agreements with Chile (in 2005), Peru (in 2009) and Costa Rica (in 2010).

It's important to recall here that China joined the WTO in 2001, and trade, initially focused on primary products (minerals and oil for example), quickly rose to higher levels thanks to the increase in Chinese investments in infrastructure, energy, minerals and development aid.

Today, China maintains a strong presence in the region. The investments China has made involve global companies such as MMG, Chinalco, CNPC, COSCO and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. Between 2000 and 2023, Chinese companies invested more than \$203 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In terms of job creation, income generation and poverty alleviation, the impact of Chinese investment in the region has been highly positive. In Peru, the recent inauguration of the Chancay mega-port (equipped with 100 percent intelligent technology) could help increase the country's GDP by almost 1 percent in 2025. It is worth noting that Chinese investments come with cutting-edge technology. For instance, the high-speed railway along

the Peruvian coast was built using technology available only in France, Spain and China, with the latter being the leader.

Yet major international developments, including the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts and piracy around the Horn of Africa have severely affected the global supply chain, creating uncertainty in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Complicating things further is the US' punitive tariffs on imports from its trading partners, especially. The dispute between the world's two largest economies has affected all countries, although the just-concluded talks between China and the US in Geneva have raised some hopes.

Latin America needs to get out of the quagmire; it needs the help it never received during its worst crises. Ordinary people in Latin American and the Caribbean don't want geopolitical disputes. They only seek better education, health and opportunities.

As former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger said in an interview with *The Economist* in May 2023: "The United States and China must learn to live together. They have less than ten years to achieve it."

The author is an emeritus professor at the Center for Higher National Studies of Peru and a member of the Peruvian Association of International Studies — APEI.

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



Zhou Shuchun

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A battle of two colors: milestone of progress or replay of old tale

The past spring witnessed a dramatic corporate battle in China's internet sector. The ongoing "red vs yellow war"; a showdown over instant retail between tech giants JD.com and Meituan, has transcended ordinary business competition. How this textbook case of rivalry ends will greatly impact the future of e-commerce in China.

That is why the relevant authorities have recently summoned major food delivery platforms including JD.com and Meituan, to address prominent issues related to competition in the food delivery sector. They called on the platforms to comply with laws and regulations, fulfill their social responsibilities, engage in fair and orderly competition, and safeguard the rights and interests of consumers, merchants, and delivery riders. The initiative is clearly aimed at promoting the regulated, healthy, and orderly development of the platform economy.

From marketplaces in the past to department stores of modern times, and from traditional retail to e-commerce, market competition has marked every evolution of commercial societies. Like all business wars, the clash between JD.com and Meituan, symbolized by the red and yellow uniforms of their delivery personnel, began with a fight for market share. However, the escalation and prolonging of the clash has likely exceeded even the competitors' initial expectations.

For Chinese people, JD.com and Meituan are household names, integrated into their daily life in the form of a pack of batteries or a box of fried rice. JD.com, a heavy-asset e-commerce platform centered on supply chains, and Meituan, a light-asset platform focused on hyper-local services, once operated within clear boundaries despite both being logistics-driven enterprises.

Like all business wars, the clash between JD.com and Meituan, symbolized by the red and yellow uniforms of their delivery personnel, began with a fight for market share.

However, industry insiders had predicted long ago that a collision between the two was inevitable. The cross-boundary rivalry between traditional e-commerce and hyper-local services is less about stealing each other's cheese and more about mutual catalysts, akin to the cat-fish effect.

Over the years, Meituan has been creating a half-hour local life service circle based on its dominance in the food delivery sector while JD's intelligent delivery network shares the underlying logic of instant delivery. In the fields of instant retail and food delivery, the two have discovered overlapping channels in their respective tracks.

Meituan's instant delivery delivering nearly 80 million orders per day inevitably erodes consumers' "stockpile shopping" habits. Goods sold on conventional e-commerce sites can be delivered as fast as ordered food. In contrast, JD's "next-day delivery" is losing luster, along with its once-proud warehouse-centric system, which is less of a strength in the era of instant gratification.

With logistics growth plateauing and core categories such as home appliances and daily essentials facing pressure, the trillion-yuan instant retail market, boasting more than 50 percent annual growth, has become a battleground.

Shortly after Spring Festival, JD.com fired the first shot to launch its food delivery service with aggressive campaigns, including a viral stunt where company chairman, Liu Qiangdong, personally delivered orders to customers' doorsteps. Meituan countered with its "moat project". Months of clashes have escalated into a war, now seen as redefining next-generation local lifestyle infrastructure.

As management theorists say, true competition isn't about slicing the pie but reshaping it. Each move in this battle is in a sense rewriting retail's DNA, reconstructing internet ecosystems, and redrawing social consumption patterns. So far, positive shifts have emerged for China's 545-million-user instant delivery market.

First of all, the technological arms race served to lift industries' productivity. Algorithmic duels now occur at millisecond precision. JD's 28-minute delivery record relies on AI dispatching systems processing thousands of real time variables, with below-300-meter accuracy; Meituan's annual 20 billion yuan R&D-backed "30-minute guarantee" uses similar optimization.

The most visible progress lies in the advancement of labor rights and interests. While the number of platform couriers nationwide exceeded 10 million in 2023, poor social insurance coverage remains contentious. Metrics like order volume and timeout rates once crushed riders, with frequent accidents. Now, the companies have begun to compete on riders' welfare, expanding insurance, healthcare and pension contributions, setting new industry benchmarks.

At the same time, as fee reduction brings relief to merchants, consumers enjoy punctuality and discounts. Nevertheless, requirements for physical store registration and ensuring food safety could catalyze healthier industry standards if widely adopted.

Yet risks loom. Rising operational costs and related stock dips hint at investors being fearful of a return to profit-sacrificing "burn-money wars", a recurring theme in the history of the internet, albeit a competition-driven industry, where reckless expansion often ends in lose-lose scenarios.

The public now hopes the "red-yellow war" will evolve into a competition for corporate responsibility, prioritizing fairness over capital overreach, rather than repeating old mistakes.

Juan Enrique Serrano-Moreno

BRI diversifies paths for CELAC cooperation

This year, which marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum, is the right time to reflect on a decade of growing cooperation between China and Latin America and the Caribbean under the Belt and Road Initiative framework. In the past 10 years, more than 20 of the 33 CELAC member states have joined the Belt and Road Initiative, reaffirming their willingness to work with China to improve infrastructure connectivity, and boost trade and investment.

The initiative has opened a new channel for LAC governments to diversify their international partnerships in a context increasingly defined by geopolitical competition.

While the initiative has produced modest results in infrastructure development in LAC states compared with its achievements in building economic corridors between China and Southeast Asia and Europe, the strategic importance of China-CELAC cooperation cannot be overlooked.

The most emblematic initiative-related infrastructure project in Latin America is the Chancay mega-port in Peru. Developed by the China Ocean Shipping Company, the Chancay project is expected to create the first deep-water port on the west coast of South America, which will receive Neo-Panamax vessels, reducing maritime transit time between South America and China by about 10 days, enhancing regional connectivity and positioning Peru as a logistics hub in the Southern Cone.

The other infrastructure projects led by Chinese companies illustrate the depth of China-CELAC cooperation. In 2020, China's State Grid Corporation acquired 96 percent stake in Compañía General de Electricidad, Chile's largest electricity distributor, for over \$3 billion, marking one of the largest Chinese investments in Chile.

Despite external pressure and calls for a political national security screening of mergers and acquisitions, Chile's antitrust authority approved the deal. In the field of urban transportation, China Railway Construction Corporation was awarded in 2021 the contract to build the first section of Santiago Metro Line 7, which covers 5.9 kilometers and 6.6 km of shield tunneling — a technological first in Chile.

Among the other contracts, China Harbour Engineering Company signed a \$44 million deal in 2015 to expand the San Antonio Port terminal in Valparaíso, and dredge over 320,000 cubic meters to increase cargo han-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

dling capacity. These projects show Chinese companies are not only investing in resource extraction but also contributing to the development of critical infrastructure networks and positioning themselves as long-term partners in Latin America's economic transformation.

That said, the full potential of Belt and Road Initiative cooperation in infrastructure is yet to be tapped, and the promise of large-scale investment has not yet translated into the transformation of the LAC states' physical connectivity due to not only global headwinds but also internal challenges.

In Latin American countries, complex approval processes, fragmented planning institutions and limited public sector capacity hinder the implementation of projects. And Chinese investors have realized that aside from

political goodwill, the success of infrastructure projects depends heavily on the administrative resilience of the host country.

Looking forward, the Belt and Road Initiative could shift its focus from physical infrastructure to a more integrated model of cooperation that includes green transition. China's commitment to ecological civilization and its global leadership in renewable energy technologies have opened a new chapter of China-LAC cooperation.

While countries like Chile and Argentina have reserves of critical minerals such as lithium and copper, resources key to the global energy transition, Chinese companies have become global leaders in electric vehicles, solar panels and battery storage capacity.

The two sides' complementarity can

therefore create the right conditions for deepening partnerships centered on green industrial development. Chinese foreign direct investment in Indonesia's nickel industry, for instance, is not limited to extraction of minerals; it also includes processing facilities and technology transfers, boosting domestic value chains. Similar models could be adapted to LAC economies to foster green industrial clusters linked to infrastructure and transport networks.

In Chile, the national lithium strategy announced in 2023 has linked foreign investment to technology transfer and ecosystem protection. Companies such as Tianqi, already present in the Chilean market, are well-positioned to support this strategy, and China's development model, with its emphasis on public-private cooperation, can inspire Latin American governments to link economic development with environmental sustainability.

Additionally, institutional frameworks such as the China-CELAC Forum and bilateral free trade agreements should be updated to reflect these new priorities, and future cooperation agreements, ought to include environmental clauses, joint innovation funds, and mechanisms for industrial upgrading. These instruments will ensure Belt and Road Initiative-related investment helps

improve connectivity and achieve long-term development goals. In other words, the past decade of China-CELAC cooperation laid the foundation for more strategic engagement, and the next phase should focus on strengthening the resilience of institutions, ecosystems and productivity.

The potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, which is high, is spread across fields such as ports and railways, green hydrogen and battery value chain.

At the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum held in Beijing on Tuesday, Latin American governments articulated a new vision of engagement with China. And the future of the Belt and Road Initiative in the region will depend on not only Chinese financing and expertise but also the LAC states' capacity to devise inclusive development strategies and build effective institutional frameworks. The challenge now is to move from diplomatic declarations to transformative action, and turn partnership into shared prosperity.

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

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

GLOBAL VIEWS

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

Europe is walking a geopolitical tightrope. It's caught in rising tensions with all three of the world's major powers — the United States, China and Russia — while still depending on each of them for its core needs: perceived military protection from the US, energy supplies from Russia, and critical supply chains from China. It's a precarious mix that risks undermining Europe's political independence, economic stability and internal cohesion.



Li Xing



Jan Oberg

First, Europe's long-standing alliance with the US is under growing strain. Trade protectionism, clashing global priorities and the unpredictability of the current US administration have chipped away at the trust underpinning the transatlantic partnership. While Washington expects Europe to fall in line — especially in its standoffs with China and Russia — it often forges ahead alone, sidelining European interests in the process.

Second, Europe's relationship with China has grown increasingly tense, marked by mistrust and a confused perception of China that simultaneously views it as a partner, a competitor and a rival. Under pressure from Washington to scale back ties with Beijing, Europe is caught in a geopolitical tug-of-war. Disputes over trade and human rights, and anxiety about China's technological edge are all straining the partnership — yet China remains a vital economic player that Europe can't afford to ignore.

Third, tensions with Russia have solidified into what many are now calling a new Cold War. Europe's firm backing of Ukraine and sweeping sanctions against Moscow have shifted Russia from a difficult partner to a clear-cut adversary. The fallout has been immediate — especially in the energy sector, where the severing of ties has triggered price shocks and supply crises across the continent.

This double bind — clashing with

all three superpowers while depending on each — has left Europe stuck in a strategic gridlock. The danger is clear: instead of emerging as a power center in a multipolar world, Europe could end up as a pawn, pulled between competing giants with little say of its own. Deep internal divisions — between those loyal to the US alliance and those pushing for greater autonomy — only make it harder to chart a unified course.

Making matters worse is a glaring lack of vision and leadership across Europe's institutions. Strategic thinking has given way to short-term political calculations, with decision-making increasingly value-driven, erratic and reactive. Rather than confronting its growing vulnerabilities with a bold plan for renewal, Europe seems to be drifting toward crisis — either unaware of, or unwilling to fully face, the scale of the challenges ahead.

Nowhere is Europe's strategic confusion more visible than in its rush toward massive rearmament. Plans to pour up to 800 billion euros (\$897.28 billion) into military buildup come at a time when the continent's economy is already under strain. Growth has stalled at around 1 percent a year, and Germany — one of the key economic powerhouses of Europe — has fallen into recession, raising serious questions about how such an ambitious military agenda can be sustained.

In this context, ramping up military spending looks like economic folly. Instead of channeling investment into innovation, green energy, infrastructure and social programs — areas crucial for long-term resilience — Europe risks sinking scarce resources into a bloated military-industrial complex with little payoff for its broader economy. The likely outcomes are harsher austerity measures, growing public frustration and mounting pressure on already fragile social systems.

Predicament break out

The 50-year anniversary of diplomatic ties is an opportune moment for the EU to escape its crisis by positively recalibrating its relations with China



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Meanwhile, the US, drifting under the increasingly isolationist and unpredictable sway of the "Make America Great Again" agenda, is retreating from global leadership. The looming threat of new trade wars, punitive tariffs and a hard turn toward economic nationalism poses serious risks for Europe's export-heavy economies. What was once a bedrock of the transatlantic alliance is now riddled with uncertainty and distrust.

If present trends persist, Europe's trajectory is clear: militarization devoid of strategic vision, economic stagnation without renewal, and endless proxy conflicts. Pouring billions into futile efforts to "defeat" a resurgent Russia will do little to fortify European societies domestically. At the same time, growing public frustration — fueled by declining living standards and widening inequality — will reach breaking point.

Widespread protests over austerity, unfairness and rising costs are likely to intensify. Europe's social cohesion, once a cornerstone of its strength, will unravel under the strain of economic hardship and political disillusionment. Nationalist movements, secessionist pressures and internal political instability could tear the European Union apart, undermining decades of integration and peace.

Europe stands at a historic precipice. A radical course correction is urgently needed. The EU must reevaluate its strategic direction to embrace a multipolar world order. Strengthening mutually beneficial ties beyond the Western bloc — particularly with China, BRICS, the Belt and Road Initiative, and rising regions such as Africa and Latin America — should become a key priority. This broader engagement would diversify the EU's global

partnerships, lessen its reliance on traditional allies, and better position Europe within an increasingly multipolar world. Deepening cooperation with non-Western powers could also catalyze much-needed foreign policy reform, shifting the EU from reactive crisis response to a forward-looking strategic agenda. Moreover, such pragmatism may foster greater cohesion among member states by prioritizing shared interests over ideological divisions.

Given the perilous situation it is in, a viable path toward stability and renewal for Europe is to rebuild a strong and pragmatic relationship with China. While Washington pressures the EU to harden its stance toward Beijing, Europe must recognize the strategic opportunity that a renewed engagement with China represents. China remains a vast market for European goods and services, a vital supplier of key technologies, and a potential partner in areas where US policies are increasingly inward-looking or adversarial. Pivoting eastward aligns the EU with global trends rather than clinging to outdated Cold War alignments.

A recalibrated partnership with China would enable Europe to diversify its economic future, ensuring access to critical materials, investment flows and manufacturing capabilities; strengthen its strategic autonomy, reduce its overreliance on the US for global policy direction; promote a multipolar global order, where Europe can act as an independent center of influence rather than as a subordinate player in a new Cold War; and accelerate its green transition, given China's leadership in renewable energy technologies and the global supply chains that support them. Climate change, pandemic preparedness and global development all require coordination with China. Strengthening diplomatic ties can improve collaboration in multilat-

eral forums including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the G20.

However, a significant barrier remains: the lack of trust, particularly due to the EU's perception of China's ambiguity regarding the Ukraine crisis. While China asserts its commitment to peace and national sovereignty, the EU views China's neutrality as veiled support for Russia. From China's perspective, the EU is increasingly seen as a junior partner in the US-led strategy to contain China's rise using issues such as technology restrictions, the Taiwan question and strategic narratives of a "China threat". This mutual distrust has hindered deeper strategic and economic engagement. To make meaningful progress, both sides must confront this trust deficit through candid dialogue on security issues, clearer stances on sovereignty and transparent collaboration in conflict resolution.

The 50th anniversary of EU-China diplomatic relations in 2025 presents a timely opportunity for the EU to reorient its strategic focus eastward. The anniversary offers a valuable platform to reassess and renew the partnership through new initiatives, agreements and policy dialogue. Rebuilding trust is essential if the EU is to fully leverage this anniversary moment for a constructive pivot toward China. At this historic crossroads, the EU must choose pragmatism over ideology, engagement over confrontation, and independence over submission. Rebuilding a strong, well-managed relationship with China is not merely an option — it is Europe's best hope for navigating an increasingly challenging global landscape.

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PANG WEIHUA AND ZENG XIANGHONG

Golden gateway

Aligning the Eurasian Middle Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative set to boost Central Asia's role and significance as a transport hub

The Middle Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, is a key trade route connecting China and Europe via Central Asia and the South Caucasus. It holds considerable strategic and economic significance.

As transportation and other infrastructure connectivity has been continuously enhanced, freight volume through the Middle Corridor has begun to rise. However, growth in freight volume was modest before 2022, because the route was largely viewed as a supplementary alternative to the Northern Corridor which connects China with the European markets via Russia.

The onset of the Ukraine crisis in 2022 triggered off a significant decline in the reliability of the Northern Corridor. In contrast, the Middle Corridor has gained prominence as a primary transportation route, thus accelerating growth in transport volumes and winning increasing global attention.

Countries along the route have been doubling down on the construction of the Middle Corridor since the start of the Ukraine crisis. In November 2022, Georgia, Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed a 2022-27 framework agreement for the development of the Middle Corridor and elimination of

barriers hindering its development. In October 2023, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia jointly created Middle Corridor Multimodal Ltd to offer one-stop logistics services. In June 2024, the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor Coordination Platform was launched, which has further strengthened cooperation between the Central Asian nations and the European Union.

In July and September 2024, China signed memoranda of understanding with Azerbaijan and Georgia on developing the Middle Corridor for the China-Europe railway express, committing to the development of the Middle Corridor. And shortly after, China joined Middle Corridor Multimodal Ltd. In November 2024, China and Türkiye held the first meeting of their leading groups on the alignment for the development of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Middle Corridor.

Driven by the concerted efforts and ongoing cooperation of countries along the route, the potential of the Middle Corridor is rapidly being unlocked. In 2024, cargo volume through the Middle Corridor reached 3.332 million metric tons, a 20.55-percent increase from the previous year, and the container volume grew by 175.61 percent to reach 56,500 TEUs. According to a World Bank forecast, the cargo throughput of the Middle Corridor could reach 11 million metric tons by 2030.

The rise of the Middle Corridor is partly driven by geopolitical developments, but it is also attributable to the strong solidarity and cooperation among nations. First, due to the confrontation between Western countries and Russia after the

Ukraine crisis, Western nations have boosted political support for and investment in the Middle Corridor in a move to weaken the Russian-dominated Northern Corridor.

Second, Central Asian countries have long aspired to become a transportation hub between Asia and Europe, aiming to lower logistics costs and boost revenues from the transit trade. Participation in the Middle Corridor not only supports this objective but also promotes regional economic integration and strengthens their autonomy and competitiveness in the global economy through enhanced infrastructure and connectivity.

Third, the synergy between the China-initiated BRI and the Middle Corridor presents new opportunities for the significant development of the transcontinental transport route. The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, one of the key projects in the alignment of the BRI and the Middle Corridor, has made breakthrough progress.

Looking ahead, the Middle Corridor is expected to bring substantial economic and social benefits to participating countries and nations along the route, and it may become a vital link in the global logistics system.

Since the Ukraine crisis, the route's operating capacity and regional economic cooperation have continued to expand. The surge in freight volume has prompted countries along the corridor to invest in upgrading and expanding infrastructure, including roads, railways, ports, and logistics facilities. These efforts not only improve the reliability and efficiency of the trade route, but also foster

trade cooperation, drive regional economic growth, and produce positive spillover effects across other sectors. Increased cargo transport has spurred demand for related industries, such as truck transport, freight forwarding, warehousing, and maintenance of vehicles and equipment, which creates jobs and generates revenue for the countries.

Additionally, the rise in transport volume has also attracted businesses and industries to establish logistics hubs along the route to optimize supply chain efficiency. This clustering effect fosters the development of industrial parks, trade zones, and logistics centers, and — most importantly — drives regional economic growth while shaping a new development model among China, Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Türkiye and Europe.

With a shared goal of strengthening connectivity across the Eurasian continent, the comprehensive alignment of the Middle Corridor and the BRI will inject new impetus into regional economic integration. Such alignment can unlock the geographic, logistical, and economic advantages of Central Asia and the Caucasus, enhance trade and cultural exchanges across Eurasia, and promote the establishment of a closer Eurasian community with a shared future.

Türkiye views China as a strategic partner and has long been an active participant in the BRI. The alignment of the BRI and the Middle Corridor is set to enhance China-Türkiye relations. This cooperation may also serve as a model for broader bilateral engagement and global partnerships.

Central Asia's top priority for participating in the BRI is to drive con-



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nectivity with China and the wider world, thereby maximizing its geographic advantages, and since the launch of the BRI in 2013, China-Europe railway express has helped transform Central Asia's geographic disadvantage into an advantage as it has become a key hub for the transit trade. The China-Europe freight trains, with 80 percent passing through Central Asia, have made the corridor one of the vital arteries and lifelines for freight transportation between East and West.

As cooperation between China and Central Asia deepens, the region serves as an essential link for China's land-based access to the European market and a golden gateway to the West. Therefore,

aligning the BRI with the Middle Corridor will significantly contribute to the shared development and mutual benefit between China and Eurasian countries.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

CULTURE

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

Ceramic works echo emperor's aesthetics

Qing Dynasty ruler played a vital role in artistic excellence by subtly refining production and style, and integrating Western painting techniques, now celebrated in an exhibition in Beijing, **Lin Qi** reports.



Years ago, the buzzword term “Yongzheng so busy” was invented to echo a pop culture moment in which Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) appeared as the main hero in several period dramas that tell of political battles tinged with love triangles.

The real emperor is indeed viewed as an industrious monarch whose work played a vital role in the successive stability and prosperity which began with the reign of his father Emperor Kangxi, and that continued through his son Qianlong's rule.

Yongzheng's dedication to excellence was exemplified in governance and his patronage of art and aesthetic pursuits he is still known for today. The variety of artworks, particularly ceramics in a range of hues, that decorated his living spaces reflect his aesthetic preferences — delicate and elegant — as the emperor approved, in person, the dimensions, colors and patterns.

The fine ceramics reveal the subtle refinement that Yongzheng favored — from monochromatic to *doucai* (contrasted colors) and *qinghua* (cobalt blue and white) — and are among over 100 works of art at the ongoing exhibition *Actualize the Perfect Clarity, Achieving Centrality and Harmony*. The objects reveal his temperament and his emphasis that art should be made to exact imperial supremacy and authority.

The exhibition runs until May 26 at the Poly Art Museum in Beijing.

An impressive plate, 50 centimeters in diameter, is highlighted in the exhibition as a testimony to the technical brilliance of *fencai*, or famille rose ware, during Yongzheng's reign. Objects made in this style assume rosy opaque colors above



Top: A ceramic candle holder with relief floral and dragon patterns from the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It incorporates the Baroque style. **Above:** *Actualize the Perfect Clarity, Achieving Centrality and Harmony*, an ongoing exhibition dedicated to Yongzheng's culturally rich life, which also reveals his temperament, as well as his emphasis on art to exact imperial supremacy, is at the Poly Art Museum in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

glaze to deliver understated beauty.

“Its elegance immediately catches your attention,” says Li Jiawei, one of the exhibition's curators.

Eight peaches and five bats are dispersed throughout the plate's inner and outer sides. The peach symbolizes vigor and prosperity, while the bat implies auspiciousness in Chinese folk tradition. The second half of bat's Mandarin pronunciation, as *fu* from *bian fu*, is the same as that of fortune and bliss.

“A closer look at the peaches shows the smooth transition from rosy hues to light green, indicating the integration of Western painting skills. The leaves have varied degrees of green, giving the audience a feel of the fruit's ripeness,” Li adds.

“The inner motifs merge with the outer ones. The branches and leaves connect the inner and outer parts into a perfect whole, which exhibits the artistic height of Yongzheng porcelain.”

Just as he embraced a reformative poli-

cymaking spirit, Yongzheng pushed to upgrade ceramic surfaces. He ordered artisans at imperial ateliers to model or employ styles from previous dynasties, such as those of the Five Kilns of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), with new colors and glazing techniques.

Yongzheng ushered in a trend to incorporate Western techniques in ceramic design. Jin Liyan, a ceramics connoisseur, says that historic documents mention that the imperial kilns in Jingdezhen,

Top: A cobalt blue and white *qinghua* vessel. **Middle:** A small bowl featuring corn poppy flowers. **Above:** A rosy bowl for tea. The rosy glaze is called *yanzhi hong* (bluish pink), showing Yongzheng's favor of an elegant style.

Jiangxi province, produced different styles of wares that employed Western styles. Examples of this are displayed in the exhibition, including a ceramic candle holder with relief floral and dragon patterns.

The object was glazed with *yangcai* (foreign enamels), an important technical innovation that marks the full bloom of ceramics during Yongzheng's reign. Its complicated structure, elaborate patterns and rich colors show the influence of European styles, such as Baroque art.

“The exhibition is a celebration of the grace embodied in ceramics made during Yongzheng's 13-year reign,” Jin notes, “including those under the supervision of Tang Ying, a ceramic artist of repute who was committed to creating new colors, techniques, and styles for the emperor's atelier.”

Yongzheng personally supervised the design of the wares to adorn palaces, evidenced by royal documents in which he gave instructions such as “the patterns must be more refined”.

The emperor's artistic creativity was realized by the works of gifted ceramists such as Tang and Nian Xiyao, who oversaw ceramic making at imperial kilns.

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Chinese Language Day sparks events in UK

LONDON — An event marking this year's Chinese Language Day was held on May 8 in London, bringing 100 students from six schools across the United Kingdom to celebrate the Chinese language and culture.

The event, themed “Chinese Language: A Gift Across Time and Space”, featured eight workshops highlighting various aspects of Chinese culture, including characters, calligraphy, poetry, martial arts, and opera masks. The activities blended traditional customs with modern elements, ranging from woodblock printing to virtual reality experiences.

“Learning Chinese is challenging but also incredibly fun and exciting. It has helped me understand Chinese culture, which is different from the cultures I've experienced before,” says Noah Eskinazi-Nehme, a student who has studied Chinese for almost two years at the City of London School and celebrates



During an event on May 8 in London marking this year's Chinese Language Day, about 100 students from six schools across the United Kingdom celebrated the Chinese language and culture via workshops and events (from left) woodblock printing, dances and calligraphy. PHOTOS BY JIA YUCHEN / XINHUA



Spring Festival with his family each year.

He wants to visit China one day to improve his language skills further while exploring the country's

diverse landscapes and seeing pandas. He also hopes his future career path will keep him “connected to China”.

Along with workshops, students

performed Chinese songs, posed for photos with a panda mascot, and received souvenirs.

Patrick Adamson, deputy head teacher of Calday Grange Gram-

mar School, says that learning Chinese enables students to “engage with China not as just a concept but as a living, dynamic culture” and “foster curiosity,

empathy, and respect for global perspectives”.

“We are preparing a generation not just to speak Mandarin but to speak across borders, to listen across cultures, and lead with understanding,” he notes.

Zhao Fei, minister of the Chinese embassy in the United Kingdom, says: “Language serves as a means for exchanging ideas and a bridge for mutual understanding.”

Zhao describes mastering Chinese as “holding a magic key that bridges the past and present”, adding that it allows students to “traverse time, explore China's 5,000 years of civilization, understand its current progress, and get a view of its future”.

Established by the United Nations, International Chinese Language Day is observed annually on April 20 to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity.

XINHUA

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

LIFE

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM
Master craftsman speaks visual language

Filigree inlay expert keeps cultural heritage of imperial art alive through sculpting and teaching, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Walking into Yuan Changjun's studio in northwest Beijing's Changping district, a large silver statue of a celestial maiden playing a reversed *pipa*, a four-stringed Chinese lute, in a flying motion catches visitors' attention.

"The statue was inspired by the iconic Dunhuang murals in Gansu province. It's not a direct replication, but a reinterpretation," says the man in his 50s who has practiced filigree inlay for over three decades.

"The face is modern — contours, expression, and hairstyle, which speaks today's visual language," he adds.

Using silver as the base material for the figure, Yuan began the creative process with one of "three core techniques" — *zhitai* (forming the base).

"This involves shaping the figure's basic form through forging and engraving, establishing the character's pose and expression," he explains.

To convey the flowing, graceful movement of its skirt, Yuan employed *huasi* (filigree) — the delicate weaving of gold or silver threads. "Every line and texture of the skirt is engraved to evoke the lightness and translucency of silk," he notes.

One of the celebrated eight imperial crafts, including jade carving and cloisonne of ancient China, filigree inlay dates back over 2,000 years to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). This intricate craft peaked during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, often used to create opulent jewelry, ceremonial ornaments and royal artifacts.

The artistic technique involves twisting threads of pure gold or silver as fine as hair into intricate motifs — floral scrolls, auspicious symbols or animal forms — then soldering them onto a base and embellishing them with precious stones, pearls, enamel, or kingfisher feathers.

The process demands extreme precision, patience, and craftsmanship, with some pieces taking months or even years to complete.

Yuan notes that many people misunderstand filigree inlay as simply a decorative patterning. In reality, it encompasses several major technical components and represents one of the most complex forms of traditional craftsmanship.

"Many of our historical gold and silver artifacts, and certain bronze objects, fall under the umbrella of filigree inlay," Yuan explains.

Beyond *zhitai* and *huasi*, *zanke* (fine engraving done with a chisel) is the third core technique.

"Each of these can stand alone in creating a complete artwork," he says.

For instance, many traditional teapots or wine vessels are made using only *zhitai*, while historical examples like gold crown from the Ming Dynasty are purely *huasi*, he says.

One of his decorative screen works is currently on display at the China National Arts and Crafts Museum, which utilizes *zanke* to depict the majesty of the



Above: Yuan Changjun, filigree inlay artist, works on a silver statue of a celestial maiden at his studio in Beijing.



Yuan's filigree works range from a bouquet of flowers (left) to a clock (below). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Great Wall in vivid details.

Adding to the richness of his current celestial maiden piece is the application of *shaolan* (blue-enamel firing technique), another important element of filigree inlay.

Yuan uses this technique to bring vibrant colors to the otherwise monochromatic silver base.

While many people associate enamel with cloisonne, Yuan clarifies that his method uses silver as the base and a different type of high-temperature glaze.

By combining wire outlining (*qiasi*), filigree filling, and colored enamel, he brings to life the intricate patterns and textures of the celestial figure's clothing.

Yuan holds many distinguished titles under his belt — traditional Chinese arts and crafts master and third-generation inheritor of filigree inlay, designated as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008.

His exquisite works have won multiple international awards, including the United Nations award for promoting intangible cultural heritage in October.

Over the years, he has restored and replicated hundreds of cultural relics for nearly 100 museums across China. Among his most celebrated achievements, the filigree-inlaid clutch bags and brooches he and his team created served as

national gifts for the 2014 APEC Summit in Beijing.

A native of the capital city's northeast Miyun district, Yuan developed a love for art during his school years.

In the early 1990s, he joined a Changping arts and crafts factory, drawn by the sheer beauty of its products and the dream of becoming a designer who could draw every day.

Since the factory specialized in filigree inlay, Yuan cut his teeth on every step of the intricate production process, staying two or three hours after his shift ended to refine his skills.

During training in engraving metal, he once struck his left index finger with a small hammer. Blood streamed down, but he continued hammering, then another blow landed on the same wound, he recalls.

To this day, he bears a small scar on that finger. His persistence paid off, and he soon became a master engraver.

Yuan considers filigree inlay an art of metal and fire.

Apart from the core techniques, the process involves more than 10 meticulous steps, including wire drawing, soldering, and stacking, each requiring careful precision.

"Take wire drawing, for example. One gram of gold can be drawn into a wire 2 kilometers long," he says. Those thin wires require extraor-

dinary soldering skill, since strands as fine as human hair must be joined seamlessly to create the intricate patterns.

A slight miscalculation in flame control can undo hours of work by melting or breaking the wire.

"All the welding must be invisible to the eye — achieved purely through handwork and experience," Yuan emphasizes.

For years, Yuan has taught at the Beijing Arts and Crafts Technician College, helping to train versatile artisans capable of mastering the full range of filigree inlay skills. His mission is clear: to ensure this extraordinary craft is never lost, and to raise a new generation of masters to carry it forward.

Huo Kaijie, Yuan's apprentice, still remembers the greatest challenge he faced at the beginning. He wasn't just mastering the intricate techniques, but learning to make cold metal breathe with life.

"I remember my hands shaking during my first soldering attempt," he recalls.

Yuan patiently guided him through each movement, transforming mechanical processes into muscle memory through countless repetitions.

"He taught me that craftsmanship isn't about rigid perfection, but developing a dialogue with the material," Huo says.

Now a teacher himself, Huo emphasizes this wisdom to skeptical students who question the relevance of handwork in the age of 3D printing.

"I show them state gifts crafted by hand so they can feel the difference," he explains, adding "Machines can replicate precision, but never the human touch."

In recent years, the art form has made a strong comeback.

Filigree inlay craftsmanship is gaining popularity in the premium market for its exquisite artistry and cultural depth, with growing sales in custom wedding jewelry and collectible art pieces, Huo observes.

He suggests that more cultural creative products with lower prices be developed to further tap market potential.

Yuan attributes the growing popularity of his trade to innovation — not merely replicating ancient forms, but pushing the boundaries of traditional craftsmanship while embracing contemporary aesthetics.

Although the celestial maiden remains unfinished, its intricate details are already taking shape, each aimed at achieving a lifelike effect.

This pursuit of realism reminds Yuan of a state gift he once crafted: a fruit bowl that appeared to hold a delicate silk scarf, yet was made entirely of metal.

"One official even tried to lift the scarf, thinking it was real," Yuan recalls with a smile.

"That's the kind of illusion we strive for — capturing the texture of silk in metal."

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Record-breaking exhibition set to bid farewell to Shanghai

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai
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Shanghai Museum announced a series of upcoming projects for its ongoing exhibition *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt*, which is scheduled to conclude in 100 days.

As one of the most favored art events in the city, the exhibition will close on Aug 17. The museum has kicked off a series of promotional campaigns for the 100-day countdown before the conclusion, calling on visitors to "grab the opportunity to see Egyptian antiquities in the last 100 days," said Chu Xiaobo, director of the museum, during a news conference on Friday.

"We expect to receive a large number of visitors during the coming weekends and summer holidays," he said. In order to meet the demand of enthusiastic visitors, the museum will extend its opening hours till 9 pm from July 1 to Aug 17 every day, except for Mondays, when the museum is closed.

For the last seven days of the exhibition, Chu has announced the "crazy 168-hour project".

"We will keep the museum open



Visitors at the exhibition halls of *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt*, at Shanghai Museum in May. The exhibition has received record-high attendance at a single paid exhibition since its launch in July 2024. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

for 168 consecutive hours, from Aug 16 to 17," he said. "This is an unprecedented practice, and no other museum in the world has done this before."

The museum will mobilize volunteers and social forces to ensure security and smooth operation during this period, he said.

The largest showcase of ancient Egyptian artifacts in Asia features 788

objects selected from seven institutions around Egypt, attracting high attention and interest among audiences from home and abroad.

Since its opening on July 19 last year, the exhibition has received more than 2 million visitors, setting a new record for the highest attendance at a single paid exhibition in museums around the world, accord-

ing to Li Feng, former deputy director of Shanghai Museum.

More than 70 percent of the visitors were from overseas and other parts of China besides Shanghai; and the exhibition has generated revenue of more than 580 million yuan (\$80.5 million). Statistics from the Egyptian ministry of tourism and antiquities also showed that the

exhibition in Shanghai has brought a 65 percent increase in the number of Chinese tourists to Egypt.

"It showcases a diverse collection that represents many facets of Egyptian civilization," said Mohamed Ismail Khaled, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, during the opening

last year. It includes depictions of prominent ancient Egyptian gods such as Osiris, Isis, Horus and Ptah, and features remarkable items from various Egyptian kings across different dynasties, highlighting statues of high-ranking people such as officials and priests, he said.

The Shanghai Museum will also take Egyptian-themed float parades to cultural landmarks and tourism sites across China and join hands with museums and tourism institutions to hold promotional campaigns of the Pharaoh's simulated experiences of traditional Chinese culture.

The museum launched new social media accounts on Saturday for Merneptah, the fourth Pharaoh of Egypt's 19th Dynasty, on the Chinese app Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, and other platforms, posting the Pharaoh's journal each day, and communicating with audiences about culture, history and topics of public interest.

Following the conclusion of the exhibition, the museum will introduce a book about the stories behind this record-breaking exhibition. And a new documentary about that will be premiered.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

LIFE

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/28/2026 12:55:25 PM

Making classical music his mission

Flutist's life took a turn when he encountered *The Yellow River Cantata* for the first time, **Chen Nan** reports.

At the age of 17, Li Xincao stood on the threshold of a life-changing moment. As an apprentice flutist in the Kunming Symphony Orchestra in Yunnan province, he was still finding his place in the world of classical music.

Then, a distinguished visitor from Beijing, the renowned conductor Yan Liangkun (1923-2017), came to collaborate with the orchestra, now recognized as the Kunming Nie Er Symphony Orchestra. Among the pieces he brought with him to perform was one that would leave an indelible mark on Li's heart — *The Yellow River Cantata*, a patriotic composition written in 1939 by Xian Xinghai (1905-45), with lyrics by poet Guang Weiran (1913-2002).

For Li, this was more than just another performance; it was his first formal encounter with a Chinese symphony.

Under Yan's baton, the cantata became a vivid, stirring embodiment of national spirit. Originally composed during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), it fueled patriotic fervor and inspired hope during a time of great struggle.

With Yan's guidance, Li was not merely playing music; he was stepping into a legacy.

Decades later, Li stood onstage with the China National Symphony Orchestra on May 8 and spoke of his journey with *The Yellow River Cantata*. He reflected on how that first encounter unexpectedly shaped the entire trajectory of his career.

To Li, Yan was more than a mentor; he was a torchbearer. In 1989, Li moved to Beijing to pursue conducting at the Central Conservatory of Music, crossing paths with Yan once again.

Having conducted the piece over 1,000 times during the course of his career, Yan's dedication to the cantata had not wavered.

"Yan believed that *The Yellow River Cantata* should be passed down to future generations," Li says.

"He sensed my passion for the music and advised me to learn it from the inside out, to try every part and gain hands-on experience."

Li took the advice to heart. He sang in the chorus, rehearsed with the choir, and studied the score obsessively.

Over the years — moving from flutist to choir member to conductor — Li estimates he has participated in more than 100 performances of the cantata.

"Each one brings back the memory of that first stirring moment in Kunming," the now 54-year-old Li says.

"More importantly, each performance is a new opportunity to bring the soul of the music and the spirit of the Chinese people to audiences around the world."



Li Xincao, 54, takes the baton for the China National Symphony Orchestra, performing *The Yellow River Cantata* in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



That spirit was alive again at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on April 29. Li led an orchestra comprising students from 11 of China's top conservatories. The program included two monumental pieces: the *Yellow River Piano Concerto* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7 in C Major, Leningrad*.

With this year marking the 80th

anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the 80th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War, two widely beloved pieces, *The Yellow River Cantata* and the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, have returned to stages around the country with striking frequency.

The concert opened with the iconic *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, a piece that has long symbolized Chinese resilience. Originating in Xian's original cantata, the concerto was co-adapted in the late 1960s by pianist Yin Chengzong.

By blending it with folk melodies, revolutionary passion, and Western classical form, Yin transformed

“It speaks to the past. But its spirit also writes the present and the future. ... I want to keep refining the music — to make it even more perfect.”

Yin Chengzong, 84, pianist, talking about his lifelong connection with the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*

Yin Chengzong, 84, performs the *Yellow River Piano Concerto* at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on April 29. The pianist co-adapted *The Yellow River Cantata* into a concerto in the late 1960s. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

present and the future. As long as I'm alive, I'll keep pushing forward. I want to keep refining the music — to make it even more perfect.”

For Li, one moment from the evening remains especially vivid: watching Yin make his way onstage — not with the upright gait of youth, but with quiet determination and undiminished purpose.

"He used to walk onstage with his head held high," Li says.

"Now, time has slowed his steps. His back is bent, his hands tremble, and he uses a walker backstage. But once that stage door opens, he removes his back brace, touches the piano keys, and suddenly, every note of the concerto returns to him, clear and alive."

Yin's connection to *The Yellow River Cantata* runs deep. Born in 1941 in Xiamen, Fujian province, he first heard it at the age of 9, huddled with his siblings around a radio. The sweeping melodies and patriotic fervor made a lasting impression.

A decade later, he studied piano at the Leningrad Conservatory, beginning a lifelong journey of bridging China and the West through music.

Reflecting on the enduring resonance of both the cantata and the concerto, Li says: "The significance of a classic lies in its enduring vitality when it is brought to life in any era."

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Pianist and his protege perform dialogue in masterful harmony

By CHEN NAN

In French composer Francis Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in D Minor*, no voice ever stands alone.

Though written for two pianos and full orchestra, the piece isn't a typical "double soloist" showcase; it's a musical dialogue — whimsical, witty and full of character — where each piano listens, answers, teases and supports the other in a vivid conversation that spans the entire performance.

This June, that conversation takes on new meaning as a celebrated pianist and his protege perform it side by side.

On June 14, under the baton of conductor Yu Ji and joined by the China Philharmonic Orchestra, Kong Jianing, a veteran pianist and professor at London's Royal College of Music, will return to the stage not just as a soloist, but also as a mentor. Sharing the piano bench is Zeng Beibei, a rising 21-year-old talent and Kong's student, making her debut in the world of double piano concertos. "This is my first time performing a piano duo with a student, and also my first time tackling a double piano concerto with another artist," says Kong, who has performed throughout the United Kingdom, the United States, Europe and Asia. "It will be a completely new experience for me."



Left: Zeng Beibei, a 21-year-old student at the Royal College of Music in London, performs frequently. Right: Zeng and her teachers, Kong Jianing (left) and Dan Zhaoyi (center). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Their shared history as teacher and student has laid a solid foundation. "We've spent years understanding each other musically," he adds.

"That makes our interpretations aligned and our ensemble work incredibly fluid."

For Zeng, the music creates vivid images — a tale of "two cities" in one.

"The first piano feels like Paris by day — bright, lively, full of movement and curiosity," she says.

"Then the second piano, which I play, brings out Paris at night — quieter, more mysterious, with deeper harmonies and a slower rhythm."

The concert program also includes Mozart's *Concerto No. 10 in E-flat Major for Two Pianos*, offering a striking contrast.

"Mozart gives us balance and clarity," Zeng notes.

"Poulenc, responds with humor and wit. It feels like two composers across centuries speaking to each other."

Kong has high praise for his young collaborator: "Beibei is a musician of deep sensitivity and vivid imagination. She's passionate, committed, and listens intently. She's not only a soloist with a distinct voice, but also

a quick, intuitive partner. I'm genuinely excited to share the stage with her."

For Zeng, this isn't her first time with the China Philharmonic Orchestra, but it's no less significant. In 2018, Zeng, then 14, performed Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 6* with the orchestra during a charity concert in Beijing.

She says she remembers the rehearsals clearly.

"It was my first real taste of professional discipline — tight schedules and serious expectations. It helped me understand how to be a soloist

“It was my first real taste of professional discipline — tight schedules and serious expectations. It helped me understand how to be a soloist and a true part of an ensemble.”

Zeng Beibei, 21, pianist, recalling her concert with the China Philharmonic Orchestra in 2018

and a true part of an ensemble," she recalls.

Later next month, Zeng and Kong will bring Poulenc's concerto to another stage. On June 22, they'll perform with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor Zhang Guoyang at King-hai Concert Hall in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"It's my first time working with that orchestra," says Zeng.

"It's both exciting and demanding. I'm preparing with care — making sure every note isn't just in my fingers, but in my whole body."

Zeng's musical journey began in Beijing, where she started piano lessons at the age of 4. She was introduced to the instrument by her parents as part of a well-rounded education. But for Zeng, it quickly became more than that. "The piano fascinated me," she recalls. "Its size, its sound — it felt like a world I had to grow into."

What began as childhood curiosity evolved into a deeper, more disciplined relationship — one built on long practice hours, steady progress, and a growing sense of musical responsibility.

Now a student at the Royal College of Music, Zeng admits that becoming a professional pianist wasn't always the plan. "At first, I just wanted to give it a try. But when I got accepted, I thought if I'm going to study this seriously, I want to see how far I can go." She will graduate in 2026.

Outside the classical world, Zeng also composes her own music, often influenced by pop and improvisation. "When I compose, I don't worry about getting every note perfect," she says. "It's more about being honest. It's a different way of connecting with myself."

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