

Recession warning

UN chief warns Hormuz disruptions could deepen global economic pain

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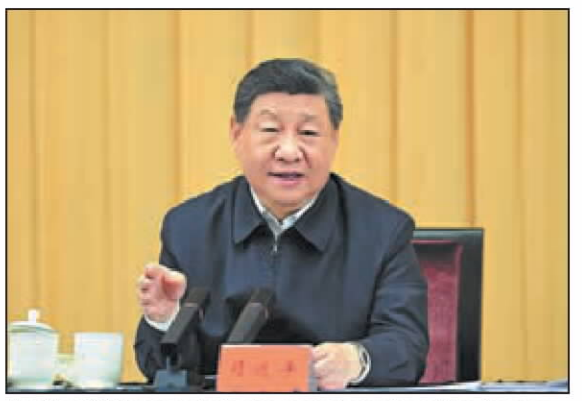
Lighting up runways

Shenyang airport team stands firm at their posts to ensure flight safety

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President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, addresses a symposium on strengthening basic research in Shanghai on Thursday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Xi urges more efforts to boost basic research

Realizing sci-tech strength through groundbreaking innovations stressed

By **CAO DESHENG**
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President Xi Jinping has called for greater efforts and more solid measures to strengthen basic research, enhance China's capacity for original innovation, and further solidify the foundation for building the nation's strength in science and technology.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks on Thursday in Shanghai when attending a symposium on strengthening basic research.

A new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation is rapidly evolving and global technological competition is increasingly focusing on fundamental cutting-edge fields, he said, adding that the importance of developing original and groundbreaking innovations is becoming more prominent.

Xi emphasized the need to seize opportunities, rise to the challenges, prioritize basic research and make consistent efforts to make new achievements.

The symposium took place as China has been paying greater attention to boosting basic research in recent years, in order to realize the nation's scientific and technological self-reliance and strength amid intensifying global competition.

By optimizing research layout, increasing investment and innovating institutional framework, China has significantly improved its basic research. The new whole-nation innovation model has paid dividends, enabling the country to funnel vast resources into key sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and semiconductors.

While addressing the symposium, Xi underlined the need for coordinated planning and top-level design to optimize the systematic layout of basic research, and to further identify the main directions and key areas of basic research.

It is important to strengthen the leading role of national research institutions and high-level research universities as well as encourage and regulate the development of new type of research and development institutions, he said.

Xi highlighted the importance of promoting the deep integration of industry and academia, led by enterprises, thereby linking the innovation chain — from basic research to application development — until research achievements are fully transformed into industrial applications.

It is essential to strengthen the construction of basic disciplines and promote the coordinated development of applied and basic disciplines, he said.

While emphasizing the need to strengthen support for basic research, Xi said that the nation will allocate a greater proportion of its science and technology expenditures toward basic research and also shape a diversified investment pattern.

It is also necessary to plan and build major sci-tech infrastructure in a systematic way, he said, calling for building intelligent research platforms.

This year's Government Work Report, which was adopted at the annual session of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, in March, indicates a strategic shift in funding allocation for basic research, which aligns with the nation's long-term goals of becoming a global leader in science and technology.

According to data from the Ministry of Science and Technology, China's total R&D investment exceeded 3.92 trillion yuan ($574 billion) in 2025, accounting for 2.8 percent of its GDP. Basic research funding last year hit nearly 280 billion yuan, accounting for 7.08 percent of total R&D spending, making it the first time the funding surpassed the 7 percent threshold.

Government officials noted that investing in basic research is vital for addressing both current and future challenges, particularly in fields such as renewable energy, AI, biotechnology and materials science.

Analysts said this strategic shift underscores a commitment to building a robust research ecosystem that supports not only academic research, but also promotes collaboration between universities, research institutions and the private sector.

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Book acts as window on China's governance philosophy

By **MO JINGXI**
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"A book holds a house of gold," said Johari Abdul, speaker of Malaysia's House of Representatives, quoting an old Chinese saying at a readers' forum on Thursday in Kuala Lumpur, where the book under discussion was the English edition of the fifth volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*.

For Johari and other Malaysian attendees at the event, the saying pointed to the broader value of the book, which offers readers a window on China's governance philosophy, development priorities and approach to international cooperation.

Against the backdrop of an evolving geopolitical landscape and profound changes in the global governance system, deeper exchanges between China and Malaysia on governance experience are of great significance to deepening bilateral friendship, mutual trust and win-win cooperation, they said.

Published in both Chinese and English last year, the fifth volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* contains 91 spoken and written works of Xi from May 27, 2022, to Dec 20, 2024. Thursday's forum brought together about 200 participants from publishing, media and other sectors in China and Malaysia.

Johari said that all the five volumes of the book represent an effort to articulate a governance philosophy — one that explains how a nation understands its development priorities and role in the world.

Engaging with such a book, Johari said, allows readers to better understand the thinking behind China's policy directions. For Malaysia, this is important not simply as an observer, but also as a long-standing partner that seeks to engage with China thoughtfully and constructively, he added.

Anwar Ridhwan, chairman of the board of directors of the Institute of Language and Literature of Malaysia, said the book represents more than a translation of language — it is also "a translation of ideas, perspectives and aspirations across cultures".

In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding one another is not a luxury but a necessity, Anwar said, adding that the book is expected to help Malaysian readers gain a clearer view of China's development goals, governance philosophy and its place in the global community.

Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook said the book's discussions on the Belt and Road Initiative, new quality productive forces, green and coordinated development, scientific and technological innovation, and the integration of the digital and real economies respond to key issues in global development.

These ideas also provide inspiration for Malaysia as it considers its own modernization path, he said, noting that Malaysia's Madani vision — a national development framework introduced by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim — and China's governance philosophy share highly consistent development aspirations.

Ngeow Chow Bing, director of the Institute of China Studies at Universiti Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, said that China's development journey over the past several decades represents one of the most remarkable transformations in modern history.

China's approach, he said, is not purely economic in a narrow sense, but multidimensional, integrating industrial upgrading, infrastructure development, technological innovation and social improvement.

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Spectacular show



A journalist takes a photo on Thursday with performers from Cebu, the Philippines, which will host the 7th Asian Beach Games, before the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan province. The games in Sanya, which started on April 22, won great applause from athletes and officials for the coastal city's competition venues and organizational capability. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY **See story, page 2**

Chinese, US officials exchange views on ties

By **ZHAO JIA** and **ZHANG CHENXU**

Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged the United States on Thursday to work with China to prepare for key high-level engagement, broaden cooperation and keep differences under control.

He made the remarks in a phone conversation with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Head-of-state diplomacy has always served as the anchor of China-US relations, Wang said, noting that under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, bilateral relations have remained generally stable.

Such stability serves the fundamental interests of both peoples and meets the broad expectations of the international community, Wang added.

He called on the two sides to safeguard the hard-won stability in bilateral ties and explore building a relationship that is strategic, constructive and stable, in order to realize mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

Regarding the Taiwan question, Wang emphasized that it concerns China's core interests and remains the biggest risk in China-US relations. Washington should honor its commitments, make the right choices, open up new space for China-US cooperation and make due efforts to achieve world peace, he said.

Rubio told Wang that the US-China relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, and that head-of-state diplomacy lies at the core of this relationship.

Both sides should maintain communication and coordination, respect each other, properly manage differences, build up outcomes for high-level engagement and seek strategic stability in bilateral ties, Rubio added.

Also on Thursday, He Lifeng, China's vice-premier and lead for China-US economic and trade affairs, held a video call with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

The Chinese side expressed serious concerns over the recent US economic and trade restrictive measures against China. Both sides agreed to continue to make good use of the China-US economic and trade consultation mechanism, build consensus, manage differences and strengthen cooperation, in order to promote the healthy, stable and sustainable development of China-US ties.

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President sends festive greetings to working people

By **ZHAO JIA**
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President Xi Jinping has extended festive greetings and best wishes to the country's working people ahead of the International Workers' Day, which falls on Friday.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, sent the greetings on behalf of the CPC Central Committee.

This year marks the 105th anniversary of the founding of the CPC and the first year of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, Xi said, praising the important contributions made by the working people to the cause of the Party and the country.

He expressed hope that working people across the country will vigorously carry forward the spirit of model workers, the working spirit and craftsmanship, work diligently, dedicate themselves to their posts, and demonstrate their role as the main force and their sense of ownership in promoting high-quality economic and social development.

Xi asked Party committees and governments at all levels to earnestly safeguard the lawful rights and interests of workers, make greater efforts to address their most pressing concerns, and encourage them to strive unremittingly for the country's grand goals.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE INSTILLS STEEL, EMPATHY IN STUDENTS

Enthusiastic response to labor-intensive programs teaching respect, value of physical work

By **ZOU SHUO**
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On a crisp autumn afternoon, Chen Yijie, a 20-year-old finance major at Renmin University of China, found herself in a baking class learning how to make a chiffon cake. On three consecutive Wednesdays, with each session lasting two to three hours, she measured flour, whipped egg whites and watched the oven with anticipation.

"It was really fun," Chen said. "I personally enjoy baking, so I chose this course. We worked in groups of three, helping each other — one stirring, one preparing ingredients. It really developed team cooperation."

When the cake came out of the oven, the sense of achievement was immediate. Chen and her group shared their creation with their peers. "It was a very happy experience," she said.

Chen is among a growing number of Chinese university students now required to complete labor education credits before graduation. Under a national guideline issued in 2020 by the Ministry of Education, undergraduate students must complete at least 32 class hours of labor education as a compulsory requirement. The policy aims to integrate labor into the broader framework of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic education, alongside traditional academic subjects.

The ministry has since called for universities to build systematic labor education curricula, emphasizing hands-on experience, teamwork and respect for workers.

Across campuses, that mandate has given rise to a remarkable range of courses: baking cakes, fixing leaky faucets, pruning trees, and harvesting bamboo fungus. And students are lining up for spots.

At Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Zhao Xiaoye, deputy Party secretary of the university's logistics department, has witnessed the enthusiasm firsthand.

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NATION

Manufacturing defies Mideast energy shock

Chinese factories continue growth spurt for second consecutive month

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China's manufacturing sector maintained its expansion streak for a second month in April, signaling sustained growth momentum despite a global energy shock triggered by tensions in the Middle East.

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The official manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index was 50.3 in April, according to National Bureau of Statistics data released on Thursday. While a marginal 0.1-point dip from March, the figure remains above the critical 50-point threshold that separates expansion from contraction.

The data revealed a substantial recovery for the backbone of the country's private sector. The PMI for small and medium-sized enterprises stood at 50.1 and 50.5, respectively, up 0.8 and 1.5 percentage points from March, with both returning to expansion territory, the NBS said.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Orient Golden Credit Rating International, attributed the rebound to the continued application of supportive macro policies targeting the real economy.

"The improvement was likely supported by a package of structural monetary and fiscal policy measures introduced earlier this year to strengthen financing support for private SMEs," Wang said.

The rapid development of "new quality productive forces", Wang said, is playing an increasingly stronger role in supporting overall macroeconomic growth.

Notably, high-tech manufacturing posted a PMI of 52.2 in April, up 0.1 percentage point from March, while equipment manufacturing recorded a PMI of 51.8, up 0.3 percentage points from the previous month.

Despite the escalation of tensions in the Middle East threatening global supply chains, analysts suggest China is uniquely buffered.

"Although Middle East tensions continue to disrupt global supply chains, China has maintained strong competitiveness in foreign trade markets," said Wen Tao, an analyst at China Logistics Information Center.

Jeremy Zook, lead analyst for China at Fitch Ratings, added that the country is relatively well positioned to withstand the energy shock, thanks to its sizable oil reserves, strong refining capacity and current energy mix.

Near-term risks of energy shortages remain limited, Zook said, adding that China's export outlook is expected to stay resilient, though growth may moderate over the coming year.

Despite the overall expansion in manufacturing, nonmanufacturing activity softened in April, with the construction sector remaining under pressure.

The construction PMI came in at 48.0, down 1.3 percentage points from March and staying in contraction territory, according to the NBS.

Wang, the analyst, said the weaker reading reflected the continued drag from the ongoing adjustment in the real estate market, and pointed to the need to further strengthen investment momentum.

Wang said there remains ample policy room to further stabilize the real estate market and to better cope with external uncertainties.

Buffalo tide



A herd of buffaloes swims across the Jialing River to reach the lush shores of Taiyang Island in Peng'an county, Sichuan province, as onlookers gather to witness the spectacle on Thursday. This unique ecological phenomenon began in the 1990s following the construction of the Mahui Hydropower Station. As water levels rose, the local buffaloes adapted, evolving from waders into skilled swimmers to reach the rich forage on the island. JIANG HONGJING / XINHUA

Forum: Nations aligned on many key issues, says expert

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"Such a holistic approach resonates with many developing countries, including Malaysia, which also prioritize balanced and inclusive growth," Bing said.

Neo Chee Hua, CEO of the Southeast Asia Research Centre for Humanities, said the fifth volume of the book focuses on high-quality development, high-level opening-up, win-win cooperation and building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Many of the important concepts in the book are reflected in China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), while the 13th Malaysia Plan also emphasizes economic resilience, supply chain security and structural reform in response to a more uncertain global environment, he noted.

The two countries are therefore highly aligned on many key issues, which lays an important foundation for deeper and more substantive Malaysia-China cooperation, he added.

Dato' Abdul Majid Ahmad Khan, president of the Malaysia-China Friendship Association and former Malaysian ambassador to China, said the forum provided an important opportunity for intellectual exchange and mutual understanding, particularly in appreciating China's governance philosophy and its broader vision for global cooperation.

Greeting the future



Maxime Prevot, Belgium's deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, waves to greet a humanoid robot during his visit to Deep Robotics Co in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. Prevot is on a five-day visit to China that started on Monday. WANG GANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Sanya praised for sports venues, hospitality

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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As the flame of the 6th Asian Beach Games flickered out on Thursday in Sanya, etching memories in the hearts and minds of athletes and officials, the tropical tourism paradise in South China's Hainan province added a feather in its cap as a fitting stage for international sporting events.

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A grand closing ceremony capped off 10 days of intense competition in 15 disciplines across sand and sea, which recorded the participation of more than 1,700 athletes from 45 countries and regions. Host China dominated the final tally with 14 gold medals, as well as two new world records in speed climbing, to cement the nation's status as a sporting power in Asia.

The games, which showcased some niche disciplines such as beach kabaddi, teqball and dragon boat race, stole the international spotlight not only for Sanya's breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture, but also for the quality and organization of its competition venues.

The sun-drenched coastal city tested and honed the skills of emerging young talent for the 20th Asian Games scheduled to take place in Nagoya, Japan, in the fall.

The beach games highlighted Sanya's capability to integrate sports, tourism, culture and lifestyle activities into the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port, with a visa-free policy applicable for 86 countries further facilitating the city's opening-up.

> "The people are very warm and friendly — all very welcoming. ... I would love to come back with my family to Sanya."
>
> **Saphna Ravichandran,** legal counsel for the Asian Football Confederation

Athletes and officials gave the thumbs-up for Sanya's warm hospitality and great organizational capability, expressing the hope to be able to visit again.

"The games have been very well organized, and I'm thankful for the chance to compete here," said Cherif Samba, a beach volleyball player from Qatar, who along with partner Ahmed Janko retained the men's title on Wednesday with a straight-sets win over an Iranian pair.

"I haven't had the time to explore Sanya properly yet, because we've spent most of our time in the athletes' village. But I've seen many interesting spots, and maybe one day I will come back for a visit," he added.

Saphna Ravichandran, a legal counsel for the Asian Football Confederation from Malaysia, said the Sanya event has helped many people, including her, to see the true picture of China.

Noting that this is her first visit to the country, Ravichandran said China is very different than what "the outside world" makes it to be. "Coming to Sanya has really changed my perspective of ... what China really is," she said.

"The people are very warm and friendly — all very welcoming. In Malaysia, we do have similar areas, like beaches and stuff, but it's always different to go out to another country to see what they can offer. So yes, I would love to come back with my family to Sanya," she added.

Raven Faith Alcoseba, a triathlete from the Philippines, praised Sanya for its easy accessibility, modern infrastructure and laid-back vibe, calling the city a must-visit destination.

"The visa-free policy made my trip so smooth. I could just arrive with my passport and then focus entirely on the competition," she said. "After the race, I even had time to go shopping at a duty-free mall, which is a wonderful bonus of being here."

Already popular for its 264 kilometers of pristine coastline and wide sandy beaches, Sanya has now earned the confidence of top officials and further established itself as an ideal host for future international sporting events.

Thomas Bach, former chief of the International Olympic Committee, hailed the beach games as a compelling example of the unifying power of sports and lauded Sanya as a competent host following his visit to the city.

"Hainan, I think, has the intention to attract even more international sports events," said Bach, who is now IOC honorary president for life.

Xing Wen in Sanya contributed to this story.

Revision to Prison Law helps protect inmate rights, improve rehabilitation

By **CAO YIN**
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China's top legislature has adopted a significant revision to the nation's Prison Law, guaranteeing better protection of prisoners' rights and more professional measures aimed at rehabilitation.

The revision to the law, comprising 121 articles across eight chapters, was adopted by the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress in a session that concluded on Thursday. The updated law will take effect on Nov 1.

The NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission said the amended law places greater emphasis on safeguarding inmates' rights, noting that respect for and protection of human rights were introduced as a general principle in the first chapter.

The revised law emphasizes that inmates' personal dignity, life, health and physical safety must remain inviolable. It also clearly stipulates that their rights to defense and to receive legal assistance while serving sentences should be protected.

Prisons are allowed to reasonably schedule the frequency and duration of inmates' phone calls and family in-person visits, based on rehabilitation needs, security classifications and custody levels. Video calls can also be arranged if necessary.

The amended law focuses on enhancing the quality of inmate education and rehabilitation, requiring innovative measures to help them reintegrate into society.

The law encourages legal, education, psychology and social work professionals to support inmate rehabilitation, while prison management staff are urged to strengthen communication and collaboration with various sectors, including government agencies, social organizations, military authorities and enterprises, to create opportunities and provide support for former inmates returning to normal life.

While maintaining prison security as a fundamental priority, the revised law also mandates stronger oversight by procuratorial agencies over the execution of prison sentences. Specialized attention is also directed toward juvenile offenders, with mandates for tailored facilities and professional personnel to support their physical and mental health.

Justice Minister He Rong said the update — the first comprehensive revision since 1994 — is a necessary response to public demand for fairness, justice and security.

She added that improvements in law enforcement institutions and mechanisms have created new circumstances and higher demands placed on prison work. Therefore, it is necessary to revise the law to incorporate the experiences, practices and mechanisms developed over the past 30 years, ensuring that prison work progresses in an orderly manner under the rule of law.

Originally enacted in 1994, the current Prison Law underwent some updates in 2012. In 2023, a comprehensive revision to the law was added to the legislative agenda of the 14th NPC Standing Committee.

Research: Country set to hike R&D spending

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China estimates an annual average increase of at least 7 percent in nationwide R&D spending during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, and Chinese companies and entrepreneurs are becoming increasingly important for the nation's research system.

During the symposium, Xi pointed out the importance of actively integrating into the global innovation network, deepening international exchanges and cooperation in basic research, jointly tackling major scientific issues such as climate change, energy, environment, life science and health, and actively participating in global science and technology governance.

While emphasizing the need to advance talent development in the field of science and technology, he called for improving the working and living conditions of professionals who engage in basic research and fostering an open, inclusive and failure-tolerant innovation environment.

Briefly

Appointment of new ministers approved

The top legislature on Thursday approved the appointment of two new ministers.

At a session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, lawmakers voted to appoint Zhang Zhu as minister of agriculture and rural affairs and Zhang Chengzhong as minister of emergency management.

Zhang Zhu, born in February 1968, previously served as deputy Party secretary of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Party secretary of its capital, Urumqi, according to public information.

Zhang Chengzhong, born in October 1970, previously served as a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Hebei Provincial Committee and Party secretary of Tangshan.

Senior official expelled from CPC, public office

Yi Huiman, a member of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, has been expelled from the CPC and dismissed from public office over serious violations of discipline and laws, China's top anti-graft agency announced on Thursday.

Yi previously served as deputy director of the Committee of Economy of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and as chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

Major carrier orders 137 Airbus A320neos

China Southern Airlines and its subsidiary, Xiamen Airlines, have signed agreements to purchase 137 Airbus A320neo family aircraft. The deal is valued at approximately $21.4 billion at list prices, though substantial discounts are expected. Deliveries are scheduled between 2028 and 2032.

The carrier said late on Wednesday that it and Xiamen Airlines had signed separate agreements with Airbus to purchase 102 and 35 A320neo jets, respectively.

This order aims to accelerate fleet renewal and meet rising travel demand.

Seven killed, 12 injured in traffic accident

Seven people were killed and 12 others injured in a traffic accident on Thursday in Yunnan province, local public security bureau said.

The accident occurred on Thursday morning in Yuanyang county, when a vehicle carrying 19 people overturned.

An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

COVER

Courses: Fulfillment, relaxation behind popularity

From page 1

"Every time we announce our cooking micro-classroom spots disappear within seconds," she said. "Just recently, we offered a *qingtuan* (sweet green rice ball) class for 70 students. They (places) were gone in less than three minutes."

But the cooking classes are about more than just food.

Zhao explained that before students start mixing ingredients, she teaches the cultural story behind the Cold Food Festival, which is traditionally observed the day before Qingming Festival, where no fire is lit and only cold food is eaten.

Many students have never had the chance to cook at home, she said. Through this process, they not only learn to make a dish but also experience the joy of labor, the inheritance of Chinese culture, and develop empathy for kitchen staff.

That empathy, Zhao stressed, is a crucial outcome.

"When a student finds a hair in their cafeteria food, they get very angry. But after they've gone through the entire process of making a dish themselves — even if they find two hairs in their own cooking — their reaction is completely different. They understand how much work goes into each dish."

Zhao believes labor education also addresses deeper needs, including mental well-being.

Science and engineering students, for example, have very tight schedules and their course loads are heavy.

Labor education helps them decompress. When they're stuck on a research problem or feeling down, getting their hands dirty outdoors can open their minds and lift their spirits, she said.

Zhao pointed to a recent outdoor labor session where students were asked to clear stones from a field before planting flowers and vegetables. Within five minutes, over 100 students had signed up.

"They're curious, they want to learn, and they also get labor hours and credits. It's a win-win," she said.

For Zhao, the old slogan "labor is the most glorious" only truly takes root through experience. The university has a persimmon harvest festival on campus every year, she said.

The fruit grows high on the trees and is not easy to pick. But when students work hard to harvest them themselves, they find the persimmons beautiful, sweet and fragrant. They show them off to friends and say they picked them. If a persimmon simply fell to the ground, they might not even pick it up, she said.

"That self-directed growth and personal experience — that's what makes them truly feel the glory of labor."



Students from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications learn to identify meat patterns during a culinary class on campus in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "I used to think labor was far away from me. Now I feel it's right beside me. I learned not just to cherish food, but to respect every person who lives by their own hands."
>
> **Li Junjie,** student at Beijing International Studies University



Students from Renmin University of China take part in a carpentry class in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Connecting to the land

On a spring morning in Handan, Hebei province, Zhi Ying, a first-year law student at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, knelt in the freshly tilled soil of a cornfield.

Under the guidance of agricultural experts, Zhi and her classmates learned to open furrows, sow seeds and cover them with earth. Weeks later, when the mature corn was harvested and sent back to campus, she tasted the fruit of her own labor.

"The sweetness lingered not just on my tongue but also brought a complete sense of achievement, from sowing to harvest," she said. "I went from being a bystander of agricultural production to someone who truly got their hands dirty."

Wang Xinyi, a second-year undergraduate majoring in artificial intelligence at BUPT participated in a spring pomegranate tree planting event on campus as part of labor classes, working alongside university leaders and fellow students.

"We dug soil, watered, and carefully planted the saplings," she said. Afterward, those who toiled sat together and listened to classmates share their stories.

Wang said labor education helped her "connect more deeply with the land and real life". She added: "As young people in the new era, we not only need to master skills like coding and technology — we also need to grow into well-rounded individuals with responsibility, teamwork skills, and an understanding of life."

"Planting a tree and waiting for it to grow teaches you patience and helps fight the anxiety of today's fast-paced world. Making food by hand shows you that technology should serve life, not the other way around. And clearing snow in winter toughens your will and deepens your respect for every ordinary worker," she said.

Zhi, who planted corn in Handan, found that the experience reshaped her understanding of time and reward.

Most of our daily learning gives immediate feedback, she said. But farming follows the unchangeable rhythm of nature — after spring planting, you have to wait through a long growing season before you can harvest in autumn, she said.

"Now, when I have three meals a day, I carry a deep sense of awe and gratitude. That kind of conservation mindset, born from firsthand experience, is something classroom lectures alone can never give."

She also noted the different mental state.

"Classroom learning is all about rational thinking and abstract knowledge — a mental drain," Zhi said. "Working in the fields is immersive: the feel of soil under your feet, the shape of seeds in your hand, the warmth of sunlight on your face. Away from complex theories, your mind actually relaxes, and you find a rare sense of peace."

Reviving 'Red memories'

Miao Hanzhe, a master's student in integrated circuit science and engineering at BUPT, led a team deep into the Jinggangshan revolutionary area in Jiangxi province for a labor practice project.

There, he identified a problem: outdated exhibition boards and monotonous explanations were failing to engage young people with the region's revolutionary heritage.

So Miao and his team designed an NFC chip-based "Red memory trigger device". Visitors can tap their phones against the device to instantly play micro-lectures and revolutionary stories, bringing static exhibits to life.

They also developed a digital study tour mini-program, putting Jinggangshan's historical sites and stories in the cloud.

The experience helped Miao see that true learning means rooting professional knowledge in the needs of the country and society. He is about to graduate and join a tech company focused on communications and chips, and is determined to tackle key technological bottlenecks and serve the nation through science.

At Beijing International Studies University, labor education is taking students into rural villages.

Zhao Mingzhuang, an undergraduate student majoring in international economics and trade, recalled spending over two hours bent over, sowing seeds in a village in Beijing's Yanqing district.

"By the time I straightened up, my back ached so much I could barely stand. That's when I truly understood what 'labor' means," she said. At lunch that day, she finished every grain of rice in her bowl. "Not a single grain left. I've learned to cherish things."

Li Junjie, a Japanese major at BISU, took part in corn-threshing. Watching the farmers, it looked easy. But when he tried, his hands hurt and his back ached within minutes, he said.

"Thanks to the local farmers who taught us their techniques, we got through it. I used to think labor was far away from me. Now I feel it's right beside me. I learned not just to cherish food, but to respect every person who lives by their own hands."

RUC has made labor education a one-credit compulsory course totaling 32 hours — eight hours of theory and 24 hours of practical work. In 2025 alone, the university offered 20 campus-wide courses, from coffee-making and traditional printing to auto repair and plumbing maintenance, plus 55 college-level courses. A Song Dynasty (960-1279) brocade accessory-making workshop attracted over 200 students within one minute of registration.

RUC English major Zhuang Zhanwang took a plumbing course. Over two days, he learned to install faucets and fix leaks, then shadowed maintenance staff on actual campus repair calls.

"I learned basic skills that will be really helpful for independent living," he said. "But equally important, I got to understand the work that maintenance staff does every day. I have a lot more respect for them now."

He also spent a full day at RUC's Tongzhou campus woodland, building insect enclosures, pruning branches, turning soil and planting vegetables.

"It was a bit tiring, but I was very happy," he said. "Seeing everyone work together and seeing the finished products — it felt very rewarding."

Exertion, sweat give students 'real rewards'

By **ZOU SHUO**

As China's universities place greater emphasis on holistic development, Beijing International Studies University has embedded labor education as a compulsory component of its undergraduate curriculum to foster respect for labor and enhance students' sense of social responsibility.

According to Zhang Xihua, head of the university's academic affairs office, the labor education program includes no fewer than 32 class hours, consisting of eight hours of theoretical instruction and 24 hours of practical work.

Practical activities take students beyond campus cleaning or routine volunteering. In Beijing's Yanqing district, for example, students work alongside agricultural technicians to clear old seedlings and plow fields in autumn. In a forest farm in Shunyi district, they learn about and harvest bamboo fungus. Other popular activities include tea-picking, tea-making, and community gardening.

"We want students to truly work, exert themselves, sweat, and gain real rewards," Zhang said.

These hands-on activities not only build practical skills but also teach students to respect labor and value its fruits, she said.

Working in the fields, they realize that farm work is far from easy and come to understand that "every grain comes from hard work". They also develop a stronger belief that labor creates a better future, she said.

Meanwhile, labor education strengthens teamwork and problem-solving abilities and also boosts physical and mental health, she added.



Students from Beijing International Studies University learn to plant trees in Beijing's Yanqing district. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Students have responded positively.

Qiu Sijing, a first-year French major at the university, said the most memorable session was cutting down dried eggplant stalks in the university's labor education base in Yanqing. Those dry stalks were hard and tough.

Cutting them with a sickle required the right angle and real effort, she said. After cutting, the students had to tie them into bundles and carry them away, and their hands were soon marked with red prints.

The experience taught her that farming is a full cycle. "It's not just sowing in spring and harvesting at the peak moment. The unnoticed cleanup work is just as essential," she said. "As a young person, I've come to appreciate the complete effort behind every achievement — including the repetitive, not so glamorous tasks."

Han Xinyu, a first-year trade economics student at the university, recalled an October labor course that took her class to a village history museum, a revolutionary memorial, and then into farm fields.

For the first time, she truly got her hands dirty from picking vegetables and shelling corn, she said. "I felt in my bones that every grain of rice comes from hard work. Labor taught me patience and groundedness, and helped me shed my previous restlessness."

Han also noted the benefits of working alongside classmates. "Unlike lectures that can make you drowsy, labor lessons — though physically tiring — lift your spirits. Working outdoors, talking and helping each other, we drew much closer as classmates."

WORLD

UN chief warns of recession as Hormuz disruptions continue

By MINLU ZHANG
at the United Nations
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UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday warned that ongoing restrictions to navigation in the Strait of Hormuz could tip the world into recession, stating that navigational rights and freedoms "must be restored immediately".

Speaking at a news conference hosted at UN headquarters in New York, the UN chief listed three scenarios tied to the duration of the Middle East crisis, which is entering its third month.

In the best case, if the restrictions are lifted today, global growth would still fall from 3.4 to 3.1 percent this year, with inflation rising to 4.4 percent, Guterres said.

If the crisis extends through midyear, 32 million people could be pushed into poverty and 45 million more could face extreme hunger, said Guterres. And if it persists through year-end, global growth could collapse to 2 percent and inflation surpass 6 percent, he said.

"These consequences are not cumulative. They are exponential," said Guterres, adding that developing countries will be hit the hardest.

The secretary-general called on all parties to comply with Security Council Resolution 2817. "Open the Strait. Let all ships pass," he said.

"Now is the time for dialogue, for solutions that pull us back from the brink, and for measures that can open a pathway to peace," Guterres said. "The world is waiting."

The warning comes amid escalating tensions following a breakdown in post-ceasefire talks between the United States and Iran earlier this month.

Two months into the US-Israeli war with Iran, the vital sea channel remains closed, choking off 20 percent of the world's oil and gas supplies. That has sent global energy prices surging and heightened concerns about the risks of an economic downturn, Reuters reported on Thursday.

Iran said on Thursday it would respond with "long and painful strikes" on US positions if Washington renewed attacks, and also restated its claim to the Strait of Hormuz, complicating US plans for a coalition to reopen the waterway.

US President Donald Trump was slated to receive a briefing on Thursday on plans for a series of fresh military strikes on Iran to compel it to negotiate an end to the conflict, a US official told Reuters.

Such options have long been part of US planning but reports of the proposed briefing, first issued by news site Axios late on Wednesday, initially spurred big gains in oil prices, with the benchmark Brent crude contract hitting more than $126 a barrel at one point. It later slipped back to around $114.

Negotiations held in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 11 and 12 failed to produce an agreement, after which Washington imposed a blockade on Iranian ports, while Iran threatened maritime traffic, preventing tankers from transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

A ceasefire between Iran, the US and Israel took effect on April 8 after 40 days of fighting that began on Feb 28 with strikes on Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Iranian officials said the attacks killed senior leadership figures, including then-Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, as well as civilians. Iran responded with missile and drone strikes targeting Israel and US assets in the region and later moved to restrict traffic through the Strait.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Thursday said any attempt by the US to impose a naval blockade would be "doomed to failure," according to a statement published on his office's website, Xinhua reported.

In a statement marking Persian Gulf National Day, Pezeshkian said regional waterways should not be subject to "unilateral foreign will", and called instead for collective security based on mutual respect among coastal states.

Xinhua and Reuters contributed to the story.

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Briefly

UNITED STATES

Fed holds rates steady amid high energy prices

The Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged on Wednesday, but in its most divided decision since 1992, noted rising concerns about inflation in a policy statement that drew three dissents from officials who no longer feel the US central bank should communicate a bias toward lowering borrowing costs. A fourth dissent at the meeting favored a quarter-percentage-point rate cut. "Inflation is elevated, in part reflecting the recent increase in global energy prices," the Fed said in its policy statement, a shift from previous language saying that inflation was just "somewhat" elevated. "Developments in the Middle East are contributing to a high level of uncertainty about the economic outlook," it said. "In support of its goals, the Committee decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 3-1/2 to 3-3/4 percent," the statement said.

LIBYA

17 killed, 7 rescued after week at sea

The Libyan Red Crescent said on Wednesday that a patrol boat recovered 17 bodies and rescued seven people during an operation to assist a stranded vessel off the North African country. The organization shared photos on its Facebook page showing aid workers hauling black body bags from a boat. It did not give information about the nationality of those killed or those rescued, but said it provided humanitarian assistance to survivors along with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which suggests they were migrants. "After eight days of distress, the *Almarqab* patrol boat, attached to the naval base, successfully rescued a stranded vessel. The operation resulted in the rescue of seven survivors and the recovery of 17 bodies," the Red Crescent said on Facebook.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Terror probe



Forensic officers comb a cordoned-off street in Golders Green, London, on Wednesday after two people were stabbed in what authorities have declared a terrorist attack. The neighborhood, home to a large Jewish community, has seen a series of targeted assaults. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "deeply concerned". KIN CHEUNG / AP

Japan condemned for rash advances in military agenda

Moves seen as stirring regional unease, trigger Beijing's call for global scrutiny

By ZHANG YUNBI
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China's diplomacy and defense authorities have spoken out to slam Japan's "dangerous" military, espionage and nuclear policy drives that have reminded other Asian countries of its atrocities over 80 years ago during World War II.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian warned on Thursday that Japan's neo-militarism is "becoming a serious concern" and "has posed a clear threat to world peace and stability".

Lin was responding to Japan's latest legislative drive to restore the military ranks used by the Imperial Japanese Army prior to the end of World War II.

According to Japanese media reports, the country has finalized a plan to revise the titles of Self-Defense Forces officers and plans to submit a draft amendment to the Japanese Diet within the year.

The reports also noted that senior government officials described the move as aimed at "creating a work environment that fosters a sense of honor" to attract and retain talent.

Lin said this "amounts to a breakthrough at both institutional and cognitive levels", and "is tantamount to rubbing salt into the wounds of the people of the victimized nations".

He noted that after World War II, Japan disbanded its military as a defeated country, and when the Japan Self-Defense Forces were established in 1954, the titles from the former military were abolished.

"The forces of justice in the international community, including the Chinese people, should remain highly vigilant about this, resolutely defend the outcomes of the victory in World War II, and ensure that the tragedies of history are not repeated," Lin said.

On Tuesday, the Japanese government revised the operational guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports.

Last week, the Japanese Diet passed a bill establishing the National Intelligence Council.

In response, China's National Defense Ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang said at a news conference on Thursday that Japan is "racing headlong" down the path of remilitarization.

"Japan's recent frequent dangerous and rash advances, testing and provocative moves in the military and security fields have directly debunked its self-proclaimed labels of a 'peace-loving nation' and a country committed to 'exclusive defense'," Zhang said.

The planned National Intelligence Council reminds people of the notorious Special Higher Police, Japan's brutal policing and espionage organization torturing people in the war, he said.

This "seriously offends the sentiments of the people of Asian countries", he added.

Retrograde actions

"All peace-loving people must remain highly vigilant against this, resolutely curb Japan's retrograde actions, and absolutely not allow it to undermine peace and wreak havoc on the world," Zhang said.

Also on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry released a working paper regarding Japan's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In the document, China called on countries that have signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to "remain highly vigilant and firmly oppose Japan's possessing nuclear weapons".

The paper urged the countries to "carefully consider Japan's strong motivation to acquire nuclear weapons and other related developments, exercise caution in nuclear cooperation with Japan, and effectively safeguard the international nuclear nonproliferation regime".

In the document published on the Foreign Ministry's website, Beijing urged Tokyo not to seek nuclear weapons in any form, not to develop nuclear submarines, and not to seek to introduce or deploy nuclear weapons within Japan.

The document urged the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to attach great importance to Japan's dangerous tendency to seek nuclear weapons and its immediate and long-term negative effect on the treaty, and to treat this as a key issue for thorough discussion and consideration.

The document called on the International Atomic Energy Agency to specifically strengthen the scope, intensity and frequency of comprehensive safeguards and verification activities regarding Japan to ensure the timely detection of any non-peaceful nuclear activities conducted by Japan.

China urges restraint, dialogue to steady intl security

By MINLU ZHANG
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China on Wednesday urged all parties to exercise restraint and uphold international law, as military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities raised global concern.

Addressing the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Sun Xiaobo, director-general of the Department of Arms Control of China's Foreign Ministry, said the world faces "increasing uncertainty and instability", with certain countries pursuing unilateral policies, imposing sanctions and provoking conflicts.

"They frequently impose sanctions and blockades on other countries, provoke conflicts and wars around the world, and arbitrarily trample on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, seriously threatening the national security and even the basic right to survival of small and medium-sized countries," Sun said.

Such actions severely undermine the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms governing international relations founded on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, he said.

Hegemonism, power politics and unilateralism pose real threats to the global nonproliferation policy, he said, warning that the pursuit of "absolute strategic advantage" and strengthened military alliances have fueled the risk of an arms race and eroded strategic stability.

"Military strikes against nuclear facilities under safeguards, without authorization from the UN Security Council, seriously violate international law," he said, adding that such actions, carried out under the pretext of nonproliferation, risk accelerating proliferation and destabilizing entire regions.

His remarks came as the situation surrounding Iran has intensified in recent weeks, with military actions reportedly targeting nuclear facilities under safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Sun called on all parties to resolve disputes through dialogue, saying preventing nuclear war and maintaining global strategic stability must remain the top priority.

China reiterated support for nuclear disarmament in a fair and orderly manner, urging states with the largest nuclear arsenals to take the lead. It called for early negotiations on a no-first-use treaty among nuclear-weapon states and a legal instrument providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states.

Under safeguards

Regarding regional issues, Sun said China renewed its call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and urged Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon state and place all its nuclear facilities under international safeguards.

Sun also warned against moves by certain countries to seek nuclear capabilities, and pointed to recent developments in Japan.

"Senior officials of certain countries have openly advocated pursuing nuclear weapons, seriously undermining the authority and credibility of the treaty," he said.

"As a country defeated in World War II, Japan refuses to acknowledge this status, is promoting revisions to its pacifist constitution and its Three Non-Nuclear Principles, expanding long-range strike capabilities, and seeking the deployment of nuclear weapons by allies on its territory."

The international community should prevent Japan from acquiring nuclear weapons, he added.

Responding to the United States delegation, the Chinese delegation on Wednesday rejected what it called "groundless smears", saying Washington was misrepresenting China's nuclear policy and shifting attention from its own disarmament responsibilities.

"The so-called 'multilateral nuclear arms control dialogue' proposed by the US is more political show than substantive engagement," the Chinese representative said, adding that it is based on "erroneous narratives" and distracts from US obligations as a major nuclear power.

China also criticized US withdrawals from key arms control agreements, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty, saying these developments have weakened the global arms control framework.

READ





Left: A view of the production line is a highlight during a tour of China YTO, a leading agricultural and construction machinery manufacturer founded in 1955 in Henan province.
Right: Students enjoy a virtual reality experience at Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Immersive lessons taught by Luoyang

As study tours trend, new courses share extensive information and hands-on experiences, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

In the early 1950s, Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang stood before a niche on the southern wall of the Ten Thousand Buddhas Cave at the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province.

For a long moment, he gazed at a statue of a bodhisattva whose face had long been destroyed. Yet, what he saw was not ruin, but a spirit of grace that reminded him of the line "Startled swan, roaming dragon" from Cao Zhi's (192-232) *Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River*.

That year, the statue inspired Mei's opera, *The Goddess of the Luo River*.

Today, more than seven decades later, groups of young students make their way to the grottoes site, where they wear virtual reality headsets and enter the cave where the statue stands. They see not only the fragmented beauty that moved Mei, but also a digital restoration of a face erased by time.

These experiences are just a glimpse of what awaits study tour participants at Longmen Grottoes, one of China's largest cave temple complexes and a UNESCO World Heritage site that represents "the pinnacle of Chinese stone carving art".

"We don't just bring cultural relics to life," says Ma Jialun, a representative of the cave site. "We want every participant to become a carrier of civilization."

Under professional guidance, visitors shape their own clay Buddha figures in art workshops and paint patterns from the grottoes' lotus-flower ceilings onto silk fans, brushstroke by brushstroke.

The programs at Longmen Grottoes are part of Luoyang's broader efforts to immerse visitors in a tangible experience of its history and culture hidden in its abundant museums and UNESCO World Heritage sites.

In late March in Beijing, Luoyang unveiled five study tours focused on archaeological exploration, Yellow River culture, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, aiming to appeal to travelers' cultural curiosity and enthusiasm.

"Beijing and Luoyang are both among the eight great ancient capitals of China," says Zhang Xu, an official from the Luoyang municipal bureau of culture, radio, television, and tourism.

Luoyang encourages travelers to explore the roots of Chinese civilization across the ruins of five ancient capital cities, explore 112 museums, and witness three UNESCO World Heritage sites.

"The city is a living museum of Chinese history," he notes.

Luoyang has established more than 100 study bases offering over 1,600 courses covering a wide range of topics, forming a comprehensive spectrum of information from the dawn of civilization to modern technology.

For the upcoming season, the city has prepared 900 tour routes tailored to meet the diverse needs of study travelers.

With multiple ancient emperors having paid homage here, the Longmen Grottoes have been systematically developing study tour activities since September 2021, transforming the weight of history into hands-on educational programs.







Top: At the Sui-Tang Dynasties Grand Canal Cultural Museum, visitors become part of the waterway in an immersive theater program where they are cast as merchants or boatmen traveling the artificial waterway that once connected Beijing to Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.
Left: A girl engages in an art project during her visit to Luoyang Museum. **Right:** Visitors learn about history at the Han-Wei Luoyang Ancient City Site Museum, in which the displays bear witness to the exchange and mutual learning between Eastern and Western civilizations along the ancient Silk Road.

For adults, the site invites scholars to lead participants into the caves for on-site academic exchanges alongside its own experts, while senior guides provide up-close art appreciation. "Visitors find it unforgettable and immersive when they watch experts engage in live scholarly debate," Ma notes.

For younger students, experience and creation are emphasized. Thirteen original courses cover areas including technology and intangible cultural heritage. One particularly inventive program uses 3D-printing technology to create 1:1 replicas of relief carvings and inscribed stelae, allowing students to experience traditional rubbing techniques firsthand.

"As students brush and press, they capture the details of the Longmen Grottoes' content," he explains.

If the Longmen Grottoes are a brilliant jewel in Luoyang's historical crown, the city's museums form a three-dimensional narrative of "what makes China".

At the Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital, visitors can explore the origins of Chinese civilization through more than 30 courses.

A course on the path of technological innovation in Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC) handicrafts is offered for visitors to vicariously feel what it's like to be Xia artisans, as they try their hand at pottery, bronze casting, and turquoise inlay, recommends Yang Kexin, a representative from Luoyang's cultural and museum system.

"Visitors can gain an intuitive understanding of the innovative spirit that has been part of the Chinese nation since ancient times," Yang says.

At the Luoyang Museum, the summer Little Museum Specialist series turns students into docents, restorers, cultural creative designers, and curators.

"Through immersive, task-driven activities, they evolve from visitors into inheritors," Yang explains.

For those interested in ancient mystic sacrificial rituals, the Luoyang Museum of Ancient Tombs takes them underground, with courses on murals and brick carvings that reveal ancient views on life and death.

The relatively new Han-Wei Luoyang Ancient City Site Museum, which opened last year, allows students to walk the Silk Road through a specially designed study guide that evokes a time when Luoyang was a Silk Road's eastern terminus.

It leads them through the museum's galleries with a series of tasks: locating artifacts that traveled from distant lands, including a Byzantine gold coin, Persian silverware and Western glassware; tracing trade routes on a map; and imagining the crowded streets of Tongtuo (copper camel) Street, the city's main boulevard, where foreign merchants once gathered.

Inside the museum, a digital exhibition brings that lost world into view. Developed by Harvard University's CAMLab, the immersive installation uses holographic projection and 3D modeling to reconstruct the ancient capital. The museum also offers hands-on experiences beyond the screen. Participants can try their hand at simulated archaeological digs or piece together replica eave tiles.

Beyond these core venues, specialized museums offer their own experiences. At the Sui-Tang Dynasties Grand Canal Cultural Museum, visitors become part of the waterway in an immersive theater program where they are cast as merchants or boatmen traveling the artificial waterway that once connected Beijing to Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Visitors can also try their hand at Tang Dynasty (618-907) three-color glazed pottery at the Luoyang Sancai Art Museum, where skilled craftsmen guide them through the entire production process.

"A museum is a great school," Yang says, encouraging visitors to measure history with their footsteps in Luoyang.

For those who want to understand not just how China's civilization was shaped but how its modern industry was built, there is China YTO. Founded in 1955, this leading agricultural and construction machinery manufacturer exposes visitors to a grittier side of the city's story.

"Young people can understand the struggle and pride of an era among gears and steel," says Guo Yushi, from the company's Dongfanghong industrial tourism program.

Stories about the first female tractor driver in China and the major pioneers who built the industry from nothing will be shared. A bus tour then passes the well-preserved Soviet-style buildings before arriving at the advanced assembly line for large-wheel tractors, where one tractor rolls off every three minutes.

Thirty percent of China's tractors are produced here, and they have been exported to more than 150 countries, Guo notes.

Hands-on activities include a clay tractor workshop and a tractor assembly model class, she recommends.

Zhang Nan, a representative of Beijing's travel industry, observes that a rising number of students across the country have opted for study tours.

Experts attribute the trend to a shift in expectations, as parents and educators no longer want passive sightseeing; they seek destinations where young people can touch, make and ask.

"The universal feedback is that the destinations that truly move people are those that explain culture thoroughly and make the experience profound," Zhang Nan explains.

Luoyang has stood out as a top destination, she adds.

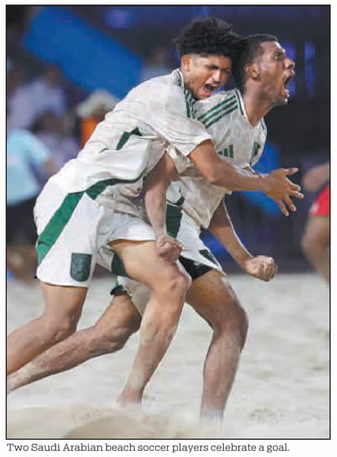
"Luoyang's history is not a cold display but a living scene in which you can participate," she says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Sanya 2026 Games Special



Thailand and Chinese Taipei compete in women's beach kabaddi. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY



Two Saudi Arabian beach soccer players celebrate a goal. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Cultural links leave lasting memories

Asian Beach Games' athletes touched by hospitality and traditional craft experiences in Sanya, Hainan province



Members of Team China celebrate at the medal ceremony on Saturday after winning the aquathlon mixed relay at the Asian Beach Games. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

By WANG YUCHEN
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The sixth Asian Beach Games Sanya 2026 brought its curtain down on Thursday in the Hainan province city, yet for many athletes, the most enduring memories may lie not in medals or ceremonies, but in quiet moments away from the spotlight.

They may be found in a sheet of calligraphy, a conversation at a craft booth, a shared meal or a photo taken with volunteers before departure. In that sense, Sanya 2026 offered athletes from across Asia not only a place to compete, but a place to meet, learn and leave with memories of the host city.

Held from April 22, the Games brought together more than 1,600 athletes from 45 Asian countries and regions.

Much of that experience unfolded at the athletes' village in Sanya Bay. Alongside accommodation, dining, transport and medical support, the village gave athletes space to unwind between events, visit cultural booths and interact with other delegations.

More than 5,100 service personnel worked in and around the village, covering catering, transport, security, cleaning and village operations. Their work kept daily life running smoothly, making room for the cultural activities and everyday exchanges that gave the village its warmth.

At the village's intangible cultural heritage exhibition area, athletes tried hands-on activities ranging from calligraphy, paper-cutting and kite-making to Li brocade, coconut carving and other Hainan crafts, guided by local artisans who explained the techniques and stories behind the works.

One participant followed a paper-cutting pattern to make a lantern, while another used a brush to write Arabic script alongside Chinese calligraphy on a sheet of paper. In such moments, the heritage displays became hands-on experiences shaped by face-to-face exchanges with local artisans.

For Magdalene Lau Ing Siew, a Malaysian open water swimmer whose family has roots in Fujian province, the visit had personal resonance. It was her first trip to China, and she was especially drawn to the coconut-carving area. "From my grandfather's stories, I learned that China is a very beautiful country and also his hometown. That was why I had been looking forward to coming here," she said.

Other members of visiting delegations also found familiar elements in Hainan's traditions.

A doctor with the Sri Lankan delegation said Li brocade patterns reminded him of similar handicrafts back home. "There are similar handicrafts in Sri Lanka, so it was easy for me to get started," he said.

During a calligraphy activity, a doctor with the Thai delegation tried Chinese calligraphy for the first time. "Chinese calligraphy is very beautiful and artistic," the doctor said, adding that he wanted to take the work home to his family.

Together, these encounters helped the village become more than a service base. For many athletes, it felt like a temporary home during the Games. A piece of calligraphy, a handmade craft or a photo with volunteers became a reminder for some of their time in Sanya beyond the competition schedule.

Traditional Chinese medicine added another dimension to the village experience. At the village's traditional Chinese medicine clinic, athletes could try massage, acupuncture, cupping and moxibustion. Medical staff provided services to delegations including those from Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, with translation devices helping them communicate. The clinic offered athletes another form of care as well as a glimpse of Chinese wellness traditions.

Everyday interactions also shaped life in the village. Volunteers helped athletes with transport arrangements, schedules and village services, offering practical support and a welcoming presence throughout the Games. As athletes from Nepal prepared to return home, they presented gifts to volunteers and posed for photos together.

In dining areas and other shared spaces, athletes sampled dishes such as Hainan rice noodles, Indian curry shrimp and Korean kimchi, while talking about training, food from home and their customs.

For some athletes, the experience extended to Sanya itself. Marc Alexander Lim, a jujitsu athlete from the Philippines, described the organization of the Games as "super smooth" and said he hoped to return to the city to enjoy its seafood and night markets.

Hadi El Chabib, a Lebanese beach volleyball player, said the Games combined high-level competition with cultural discovery. "It's a beautiful country, beautiful people, very nice culture," he said, adding that the competition was well organized and that his team had enjoyed its time in China.



Players from the Omani team celebrate a goal during the men's beach soccer semifinals. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY



An athlete from Bhutan experiences the art of coconut carving in the intangible cultural heritage exhibition area. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY



Davoud Shokri Baghdadabadi (second from right) of the Iranian team kicks out for a goal during the men's beach soccer final on Wednesday. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Nations find peace and solidarity through sport

By XING WEN and **CHEN BOWEN**
in Sanya, Hainan province

> "I think all the people in Iran are very happy about this achievement in Sanya. Sports can heal our pain."
>
> **Mahdi Alinejad,** secretary-general of the Iranian National Olympic Committee

No cleats. No hard ground. No room for reckless slides or brute force. Instead, beach soccer rewards barefoot artistry on soft sand: delicate footwork, razor-sharp turns, and tiny passing combinations that carve open defenses.

Most captivating of all, stunts like diving headers, scissor kicks and bicycle kicks hang in the air just long enough for the crowd to erupt.

To play barefoot could somehow lower one's guard. It means shedding disguises, leaving behind identities and pretenses, so that the soles can feel the sand's warmth directly; skin to earth, body to nature.

Under a warm sea breeze and orange sunset, the recently concluded sixth Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan province, brought players and spectators together to share in the laid-back, respectful and peaceful vibe of beach soccer matches.

Now look at the four best beach soccer teams in the Games: Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Palestine.

Caught in active conflict, shaken by regional turmoil, or burdened by unresolved, long-standing strife; all are facing uncertainties. Not one is truly at peace.

Take Iran for example, a nation still bleeding from war. It sent a 57-athlete delegation to contest 10 out of the total 14 sports disciplines in Sanya, and ended up third on the medal table with nine golds and one silver.

"It was a historic placing for our team," said Mahdi Alinejad, secretary-general of the Iranian National Olympic Committee.

He said the war had destroyed some of their sports training bases and there were no flights from Tehran. They had to start their journey with several bus rides that took more than 20 hours to reach Ashgabat, the capital of neighboring Turkmenistan, from which they could finally take a plane. The whole journey took them 52 hours.

"We tried to make up for the lack of training, as we didn't have much time to prepare because of the war," Alinejad told China Daily after Iran beat Oman 6-2 to clinch the gold medal in beach soccer on Wednesday night.

"I think all the people in Iran are very happy about this achievement in Sanya. Sports can heal our pain," he said, adding that they received a warm welcome in Sanya, as they constantly heard support and cheers from the stands. "We want to show that we support the peace and unity on our continent."

Talib Al-Thanawi, head coach of Oman's beach soccer team, said that they have a good relationship with Iran in sports. They invite each other to exchange and play matches, and they often meet in the finals of major tournaments.

When asked if he believed that sports can make the world a better place, he responded with an immediate yes. "In a sporting gala like this, you meet people, you get connected, and you find new friends," he said. "You see (that in) the world, war's often happening. But here? Not one makes a difference."

Mundhir Al-Barwani, team doctor of Oman's beach soccer team, shares the same sentiment. A beach soccer lover since the age of 6, he said he enjoyed watching the games and soaking up the atmosphere. He was often seen smiling broadly while dancing to the music on the sidelines.

"I also live in the athletes' village, where athletes from different countries interact very frequently, and I talked a lot with medical team members from countries including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia," he said.

"Sport is loved by everyone, and that really brings everyone together, regardless of where you are in the world. So I think that's something you can see through every aspect of sports," said Saphna Ravichandran, a legal counsel at the Asian Football Confederation.

Reflecting on the Games, Husain Al-Musallam, director-general of the Olympic Council of Asia, highlighted that the presence alone of these conflict-ridden countries demonstrates that this is a game of peace — and that, he said, is the core value of the Games.

"You saw the athletes living in one place under one roof, in one restaurant, in one competition venue, in one training venue. And they are happy with each other. They are hugging each other," said Al-Musallam. "The future Games will follow in the footsteps of the Sanya Asian Beach Games."

Contact the writers at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn









Above, from left: Attendees take photos with Yaya, the mascot of the sixth Asian Beach Games. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY Thailand's team celebrates victory in the men's beach handball group stage match. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY Athletes take photos with performers after a cultural show. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY Saudi Arabian beach soccer players celebrate scoring a goal. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

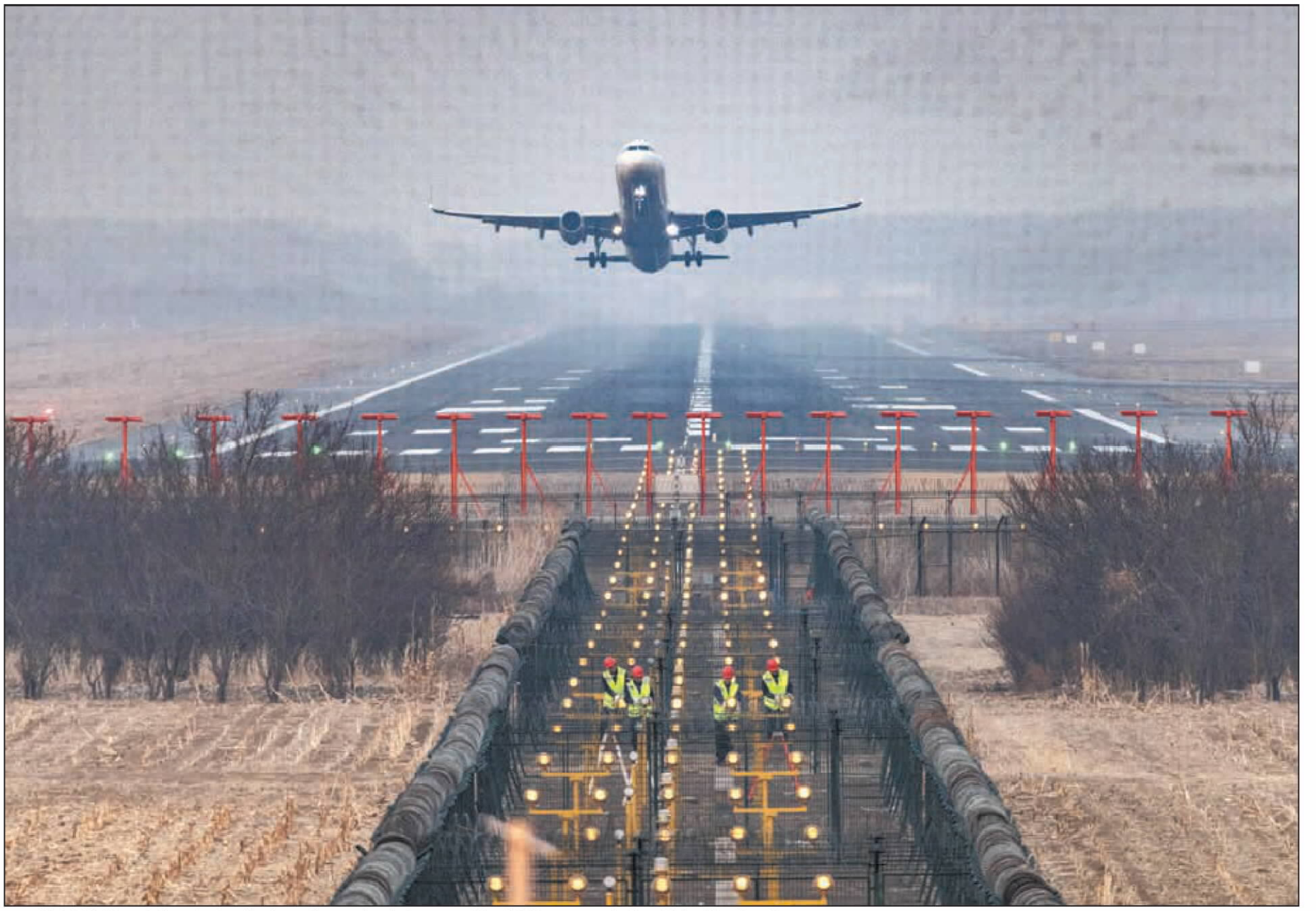
Right: China's Shao Yuqi in action at the women's beach high jump final at the sixth Asian Beach Games. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY





An Iranian athlete tests his chopstick skills with a traditional Chinese game in the athletes' village. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

IMAGE



Airfield lighting staff conduct routine inspections and maintenance on March 26 to ensure safe aircraft takeoff and landing. PHOTOS BY CHEN SONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Airfield lighting staff inspect taxiway guidance signs to ensure clear and accurate guidance for night taxiing operations on March 26.

GUARDING THE SKIES

Shenyang airport's team behind the lights

As night falls over Shenyang Taoxian International Airport, its airfield lighting system guides aircraft takeoff and landing, backed by the 24/7 dedication of the Ruijie Chuangxin Team from the Airfield Lighting Supporting Office. Dubbed the "guardians of the airport's eyes", the team stands firm at their posts, wielding professional skills to ensure the safety of flight operations.

Airfield lighting is the "lifeline" for aircraft movements. The team undertakes a full range of tasks including inspection, maintenance, emergency repairs and upgrades of runways, taxiways, lighting systems and signage. Operating on round-the-clock standby, the team adheres to a "second-level response and minute-level disposal" principle to ensure uninterrupted facility performance.

During the winter-spring transition period, sharp temperature fluctuations pose severe challenges. Working only during flight gaps, team members must carry tools, climb towers, and calibrate, repair and replace lights one by one on icy runways, strictly complying with civil aviation standards to eliminate hazards.

Beyond routine work, the team has made notable strides in innovation. It has independently developed rapid maintenance tools, boosting lamp replacement efficiency by 30 percent, established a closed-loop "prediction-inspection-rectification" mechanism to prevent risks at the source, and promoted technical continuity through a mentor-apprentice system.

Through harsh winters and scorching summers, the team members steadfastly adhere to their posts. With their commitment, they embody civil aviation spirit, providing a reliable "air beacon" for airport safety and passengers' peaceful journeys.

CHINA DAILY



Airfield lighting staff carry out the disassembly, inspection and commissioning of vertical runway edge lights in the workshop on March 26, preparing for reinstallation.



Senior technicians offer hands-on guidance to junior staff, explaining the functions and layout of airfield lights on March 26.



Airfield lighting staff inspect airport lighting facilities on March 26.



Daily tools, instruments and equipments used by airfield lighting staff are displayed.



Airfield lighting staff carry out detailed inspection and maintenance of the approach lighting system, ensuring safe visual guidance for aircraft landing at night on March 26.



Airfield lighting technicians conduct power-on tests on runway threshold lights and end lights in the workshop on March 26.

BIZ LIFE

Healthcare, rehab applications account for largest share of demand

BCI tech moves beyond research labs





Top: An employee from BrainCo showcases using intelligent bionic hands to practice calligraphy during the 135th China Import and Export Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province on April 15, 2024. LIU DAWEI / XINHUA **Left:** A staff member with a disabled right hand from BrainCo takes off glasses with the company's intelligent bionic hand during the third China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing on July 17. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

> "The purpose of technology is ... whether it can help people rebuild their lives."
>
> A spokesperson for BrainCo

Policy, venture capital powering commercial rollouts



A patient undergoes rehabilitation treatment through mental control using a brain-computer interface device at a hospital in Chongqing on April 10. CHEN CHENG / XINHUA

By LI JING
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On a weekday afternoon, Cai Yuqingyan waits outside a kindergarten gate. For most parents, the moment a child runs into their arms is entirely unremarkable. For Cai, it is a hard-won triumph.

A world champion in para swimming and canoeing, Cai lost her leg in a traffic accident before her third birthday. For decades, navigating life on crutches meant that even a simple, spontaneous embrace required careful physical calculation.

That changed after she was fitted with an intelligent bionic leg developed by Chinese neurotech firm BrainCo.

"Now when my daughter runs toward me, I can stand steady and catch her," Cai said. "It used to be something I had to consciously prepare for. Now, it's just everyday life."

Her experience reflects a broader shift as brain-computer interface (BCI) technologies begin moving beyond research laboratories into commercial medical devices aimed at rehabilitation and assistive care.

Industry researchers say the market remains small but is expanding rapidly. Global BCI revenue could grow from about $562 million in 2024 to more than $2.2 billion by 2032, market research firm Kings Research estimates, with healthcare and rehabilitation applications accounting for the largest share of current demand.

For BrainCo, the move from academic theory to commercial hardware was sparked by a chance encounter.

During the company's early days, its researchers met a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who had lost his right hand in a laboratory accident. The engineering team began to wonder if their ongoing research into neural signals could be applied to control a prosthetic limb. That single question birthed the company's first neural-controlled prototype.

As development continued, the potential market became clearer. China is home to about 85 million people with disabilities, according to the China Disabled Persons' Federation, including 24 million living with limb impairments. Many advanced assistive devices remain expensive or difficult to access, limiting their use among potential users.

That gap helped shape BrainCo's commercial strategy, which the company says focuses on usability and affordability. Engineers focused on improving neural signal decoding to enable more precise movement control. The company says its prosthetic hands can move individual fingers independently, allowing users to perform tasks such as typing or writing.

Globally, much of the attention around BCI technology has focused on invasive brain implants developed by companies such as Elon Musk's Neuralink. These systems implant electrodes directly into the brain to capture high-resolution neural signals, but they involve neurosurgery and lengthy and stringent regulatory approval.

BrainCo has instead focused on noninvasive wearable devices designed to interpret neural signals through external sensors. The approach avoids surgical procedures and could potentially reach a broader range of rehabilitation and consumer health applications, the company said.

The technology relies on proprietary hydrogel electrodes designed to capture neural signals without conductive gels.

According to the company, the sensors can achieve about 95 percent of medical-grade signal quality while decoding motor intentions in roughly 200 milliseconds.

BrainCo said its products are now sold in more than 35 countries and regions, with overseas markets accounting for about 30 percent of its revenue.

Despite the technological progress, wider adoption of BCI-based rehabilitation devices still faces challenges. Healthcare systems and insurance providers remain cautious about emerging neuro-technology, while procurement processes for assistive devices can move slowly.

Policy support is beginning to emerge. In 2025, the National Healthcare Security Administration issued pricing guidelines for neurological medical services that, for the first time, created dedicated reimbursement categories for BCI procedures, including fees for implanting and removing invasive BCI devices as well as adaptation services for noninvasive systems.

The move signaled growing policy recognition of BCI technology as it begins moving toward clinical application. The regulator has released 39 batches of medical service pricing guidelines covering about 180 new technology categories to help speed up the clinical adoption of emerging medical technologies, according to official data.

"The policy framework could help accelerate adoption of rehabilitation devices by clarifying how neurotech services may be priced and integrated into healthcare systems," said a spokesperson for BrainCo.

To expand access, BrainCo says it has focused on reducing manufacturing costs by developing core components in-house and using domestic supply chains.

The company says the retail price of its intelligent prosthetic limbs is roughly one-fifth to one-seventh that of comparable products in some Western markets.

Local governments have also begun testing the technology. In Zhejiang province, a government-backed program has already helped fit around 2,000 people with intelligent prosthetic limbs.

For some users, the changes are felt in everyday milestones. Hou Yunyan, a snowboard athlete who lost her left leg in a car crash at age 9, had never climbed stairs independently even after joining a sports team years later.

That changed after she began using a neural-controlled prosthetic leg.

"I felt calm and steady," she recalled of the first time she climbed a staircase on her own. "It was the first time I experienced what it feels like to walk upstairs."

"The purpose of technology is not how futuristic it looks," a BrainCo spokesperson said. "It's whether it can help people rebuild their lives."

By LI JING

Inside a quiet rehabilitation ward in eastern China, a paralyzed patient stares intently at a plastic cup. He doesn't move a muscle, yet a robotic, pneumatic glove encasing his paralyzed hand suddenly hums to life, smoothly closing its fingers around the cup.

The invisible trigger? His sheer intention.

By decoding neural signals and bypassing severed spinal cords entirely, brain-computer interface (BCI) technology is performing what looks like medical magic. But behind this clinical breakthrough lies a rapidly maturing business ecosystem. Driven by a strategic influx of venture capital and robust policy tailwinds, BCI is fast graduating from academic curiosity to early commercial deployment.

For years, the BCI sector was a pure-play scientific endeavor confined to university labs. Today, it is arguably the hottest frontier in venture capital.

Data from a recent report by the Beijing-based Fourth Wave Technology Think Tank and Zhongguancun Tiancheng Innovation Research Center paint a staggering picture. Throughout 2025, Chinese BCI startups recorded at least 24 financing events, raising more than 1.45 billion yuan ($212.1 million). In stark contrast, the first three months of 2026 alone saw at least 17 funding rounds, with the total capital raised already eclipsing the entirety of 2025.

The report projects China's BCI market could breach the 5-billion-yuan mark in 2026, on track to reach 15 billion yuan by 2030.

The deal flow reflects this bullish sentiment. Hangzhou-based BrainCo closed a massive 2-billion-yuan funding round in January. More recently, Shanghai-based medical neurotech firm StairMed secured 500 million yuan, bringing its total funding to more than 1.1 billion yuan within a single year.

"The technology is at an inflection point, transitioning from experimental verification to early clinical implementation," Gu Xiaosong, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said at a BCI developer conference in Tianjin. He attributes this shift to breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, machine learning algorithms, and high-performance computing, which are finally transforming laboratory prototypes into clinical-grade medical systems.

In July 2025, China issued BCI industry development guidelines, urging breakthroughs in core hardware/software, high-performance products and real-world applications. Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong province and others introduced supportive policies.

In the 2026 Government Work Report, BCI was formally designated as a future industry, prioritized alongside strategic sectors such as advanced robotics and embodied AI. This alignment underscores BCI's role not only as a medical tool, but also as a critical control component for the next generation of intelligent machines.

The true catalyst for the current market exuberance was a recent regulatory breakthrough. China's National Medical Products Administration approved the world's first implantable BCI medical device for clinical use.

Dubbed the NEO system, the semi-invasive device acts as a wireless translator between the brain and the body, specifically designed to help patients with cervical spinal cord injuries regain hand-grasping functions.

Developed by a Tsinghua University research team led by professor Hong Bo from the School of Biomedical Engineering in collaboration with Neuracle, the NEO system represents a different technological approach from some Western competitors.

In the United States, Elon Musk's Neuralink is pursuing a fully invasive route, implanting electrodes directly into brain tissue. While this can yield high-resolution signals, it involves more invasive surgery and associated risks.

Tsinghua's NEO, by contrast, is implanted with its main device embedded in the skull, while electrodes are placed over the dura mater between the skull and the cerebral cortex, without penetrating brain tissue.

"For quadriplegic patients with cervical spinal injuries who can't grasp objects, we implant a coin-sized device outside the dura mater using minimal invasive surgery," Wang Yujing, Neuracle product director, told People's Daily.

"The system decodes brain signals in real time, enabling them to control a pneumatic glove with their thoughts to grasp objects or drink water," she added.

The clinical data are highly promising. In trials conducted across 11 Chinese hospitals, all participants achieved brain-controlled grasping. The system boasted a decoding accuracy exceeding 90 percent, with a response delay of mere milliseconds. Furthermore, the implant is powered wirelessly through near-field communication, eliminating the need for internal batteries and risky replacement surgeries.

Despite the hype surrounding surgical implants, the reality of today's commercial landscape is far less invasive.

According to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, noninvasive systems — such as wearable EEG headsets — currently account for more than 80 percent of China's BCI market. Because they require no surgery, companies are already monetizing these devices, rolling out products ranging from neurofeedback headbands for gamers and students, to advanced sleep-monitoring systems.

Yet, beneath the soaring valuations, sobering technical and ethical hurdles remain.

For implantable devices, the human body's immune system is a formidable opponent. Over time, the body forms scar tissue around implanted electrodes, which can degrade signal quality.

Data scarcity is another major bottleneck. Unlike generative AI models that are trained on billions of readily available internet texts, BCI algorithms require highly sensitive neural data, which is exceedingly difficult and expensive to collect.

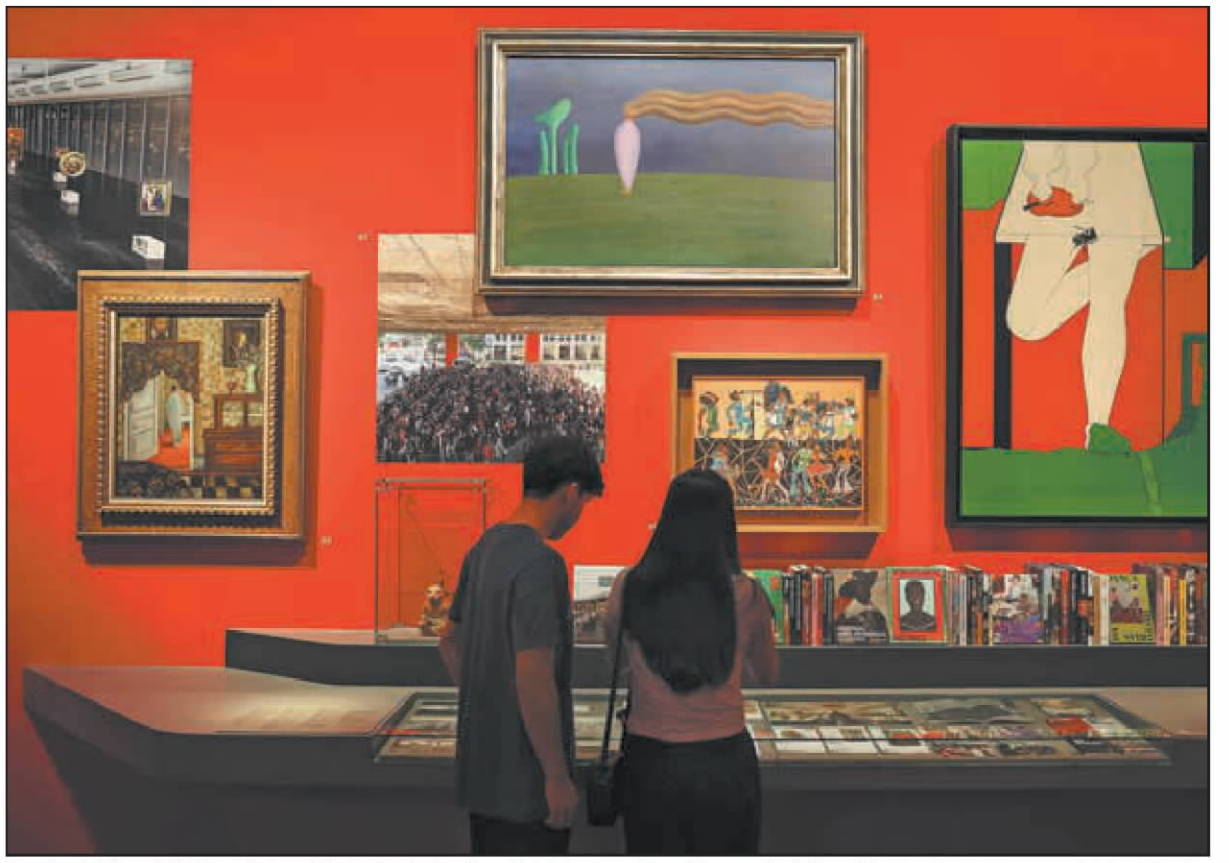
Then there is the issue of cognitive privacy. Recognizing the profound ethical implications of "reading minds", China's Ministry of Science and Technology issued the country's first national ethical guidelines for BCI research in February 2024, ensuring the technology remains "tech for good" and prioritizing patient autonomy.

"The approval of the first product is just the beginning," noted Hong of Tsinghua University. Scientists are still grappling with deep biological mysteries, such as how these interfaces interact with the brain's natural plasticity, and whether they can actually help heal the nervous system rather than just act as a high-tech crutch.

For now, medical rehabilitation will be the industry's most viable cash cow. But the ultimate ceiling of the BCI market remains unknown.

Translating the silent symphony of human thought into code remains one of the most complex engineering challenges in modern history. As one researcher put it: decoding any conventional computer system is child's play compared to understanding the human brain.

TRAVEL



People visit the exhibition *Stories of the MASP* during the official inauguration of the new building of the Sao Paulo Museum of Art on March 28, 2025. ISAAC FONTANA / EPA-EFE

Beyond the beaches Brazil's urban giant beckons

Sao Paulo entices more travelers to rediscover city with deep cultural density

By **ALFRED ROMANN**
in Sao Paulo, Brazil
For China Daily

At first glance, Sao Paulo can seem hard to read.

Brazil's main financial center does not offer itself in the postcard language of Rio de Janeiro. There is no single defining vista, no instantly digestible icon that explains the whole place. It is too large, too layered and too restless for that.

But after a few days, another city emerges: one of deep cultural density, where heavy tropical rain can give way to a blazing sunset, where dense greenery presses up against office towers, and where a walk at dusk can lead from formal avenues and modernist landmarks to streets alive with bars, food and conversation.

On a recent visit, the city revealed itself in fragments: a skyline glowing orange after a storm, late-night crowds spilling onto the pavement under strings of lights, buses moving beside protected bike lanes, and a sense of dense urban life. Sao Paulo does not feel curated for tourists.

That may be precisely why it is beginning to resonate with Chinese travelers.

For years, Latin America sat outside the mainstream imagination of China's outbound tourism market, except for a handful of marquee destinations. Brazil, though admired from afar, often remained more of an aspiration than an actual itinerary. The fact that China is very far away may have played into it — it can take a full day or more to get there from many cities in China.

Still, this appears to be changing.

Official Brazilian figures show that the country received 94,400 visitors from China from January to November 2025, surpassing the total recorded for all of 2024.

The growth validates a premeditated strategy by Brazil's tourism authorities.

"Attracting Chinese tourists is a strategic opportunity for Brazil," said Marcelo Freixo, the then president of Embratur, the country's international tourism promotion agency, last May. "This rapprochement is essential to paving the way toward new connections and, potentially, allowing more Chinese people to discover the attractions of Brazil."

A few months later, in January 2026, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced that Brazil would exempt certain categories of short-term visas for Chinese citizens, in reciprocity for the exemption China had granted Brazilians.

Travel interest spiked. According to Qunar, a major Chinese online travel platform, searches for flights to Sao Paulo jumped 22 percent hour by hour right after the announcement.

The timing is significant because Brazil is in the middle of a tourism boom.

The country closed 2025 with more than 9.2 million international visitors, a record. Sao Paulo led the country for foreign arrivals, receiving 2,753,869 international visitors throughout the year, ahead of Rio de Janeiro and Rio Grande do Sul, the southern state that borders Uruguay and Argentina. That makes the city not just Brazil's financial capital, but its main gateway for foreign visitors.

Gateway to country

Sao Paulo is often the point of arrival, the place where a continent-scale trip often begins, but it is also a place worth lingering in.

What visitors find is not a city organized around a single landmark or feature, but one built on accumulation with the closest beaches sitting more than an hour away.

Sao Paulo rewards appetite: for museums, for architecture, for food, for neighborhoods and for the pleasure of noticing how many different histories have been compressed into one metropolis.

Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and many other immigrant communities have shaped the city's cuisine, traditions and public life over generations, helping create one of the world's most varied urban food scenes. Official Brazilian tourism material highlights that multicultural layering is one of the city's defining traits.

That diversity is one of Sao Paulo's most appealing aspects for travelers from China, and anywhere else.

Meals can become a kind of map.

A day might begin with strong Brazilian coffee and pao de queijo (a pastry with cheese), move on to ramen or sushi in Liberdade, continue with an Italian lunch in Bixiga or Jardins, and end the day with cocktails and plates to share in a crowded neighborhood bar.

This is a place where Michelin-starred restaurants sit not far from old markets, corner bakeries and family-run eateries. The range is staggering, but what stands out even more is the way food here reflects migration, adaptation and urban confidence.

Liberdade may be one of the city's most immediately legible neighborhoods for Chinese visitors. Liberdade remains the neighborhood most associated with the city's large Japanese population, but the district today also carries broader East Asian influences, including Chinese and Korean, visible in its shops, grocery stores and restaurants.

For Chinese travelers, that can create moments of recognition in a city that is otherwise unmistakably Brazilian. The lanterns, the signs, the food and the foot traffic may feel familiar in fragments, yet the atmosphere is entirely local, shaped by Sao Paulo rather than transplanted into it.

Still, Sao Paulo's strongest case as a destination may be its cultural infrastructure.

Paulista Avenue remains the city's symbolic spine, and the Sao Paulo Museum of Art, known as MASP, is one of its essential stops. The museum, founded in 1947, became the first modern museum in Brazil. Its building, designed by Lina Bo Bardi, is among the most recognizable pieces of modern architecture in Latin America: suspended, severe and unforgettable. And its collection is impressive.

Even travelers with little prior knowledge of Brazilian art are likely to feel the force of the place. MASP is not simply a museum to visit; it is one of the structures that seems to explain Sao Paulo's ambitions back to itself.

"Sao Paulo surprised me," said Karina Rubio, a visitor from Chile who was in the city for the first time attending a conference and had just stepped out of the MASP. "It feels very alive. There is music, a lot of culture and a lot of good food ... the museum was one of the highlights for me."

Another highlight for Rubio was the city's famous churrascarias (or steakhouses), typically all-you-can-eat-style restaurants serving a variety of cuts of beef.

"Of course I had to try them!" she said.

Not far away, Ibirapuera Park offers another version of the city.

Often described as Sao Paulo's "green lung", the park brings together open lawns, dense trees, lakes, museums and performance spaces in one vast urban expanse. It is where many visitors understand that Sao Paulo, for all its scale and density, also knows how to make room for clean air, shade and peace.

The park also says something important about the city's character. In many global metropolises, cultural life is scattered. In Sao Paulo, it can feel concentrated, almost insistently available. Art, performance, architecture and public life are not tucked away from one another. They overlap.

And that overlap is part of what makes the city so compelling.

Sao Paulo is a megacity, but not a sealed one. It does not feel like a glass box of towers and highways, even though it has plenty of both. Trees soften vast stretches of it. Neighborhoods break up the scale. Street life keeps reasserting itself.

From a window overlooking one of the city's greener central areas, the skyline after rain can look almost theatrical, with towers fading into haze and an orange band of sunset setting the horizon on fire. Later, the city reassembles itself in lights, traffic and silhouettes.

At ground level, it often feels more intimate than its size should allow.

During a recent evening, tables spilled out into the street outside a bar, and office workers and younger drinkers stood shoulder to shoulder under strands of yellow lights. The scene felt easy, social and dense with energy.

Traffic, however, can be brutal at rush hour. TomTom's 2025 data showed that a 10-kilometer drive in Sao Paulo took about 34 minutes in the morning rush and more than 37 minutes in the evening. The saving grace is public transport: the subway and rail map spreads across the city and deep into the wider metropolitan area, giving visitors a practical way to avoid the worst road congestion.

These details help explain the kind of traveler Sao Paulo is likely to attract.

New strategy

This is not primarily a city of passive sightseeing. It is a city for people who like urban texture, who enjoy moving through neighborhoods, who want to eat well, who do not mind a little ambiguity and who understand that some of the world's best travel experiences arrive not in one grand reveal but in layers.

That also helps explain why Sao Paulo fits Brazil's new strategy for engaging Chinese travelers.

Brazil has been working to make itself more visible and more bookable in China.

Embratur returned to ITB China, the largest B2B travel trade show focused on the Chinese market, in 2025 after a six-year absence.

The agency said at the time that it was making a strategic push into China with a variety of efforts, including launching a "Brazil Travel Specialist" platform in Mandarin to train Chinese travel agents and operators, an official tourism website in Mandarin and opening a public relations office in China.

Brazil also moved to expand its presence through Chinese-language promotion and partnerships with major travel companies. Reports on those efforts said agreements were signed with Trip.com Group and Tongcheng Travel.

"We are very optimistic about the growth that we will continue to see in the Chinese market," said Freixo in February. He credited the visa exemptions announced in January with much of the growth.

"This is the year of Brazil in China and we have a plan of action that will further boost the interest in knowing our culture and our natural destinations, which today are the ones that most attract the Chinese," said Freixo.

Long-haul tourism depends not only on desire, but on visibility, language access and booking infrastructure. The easier Brazil becomes to search, compare and book in Chinese, the more likely Sao Paulo is to shift from an abstract possibility to a real itinerary.

Sao Paulo has long had the substance to attract international leisure travelers, but abroad it was often overshadowed by Brazil's beach imagery and by its own reputation as a city of business first. That reputation is not wrong. Sao Paulo is a commercial powerhouse. But it is also incomplete.

The same city that hosts major corporations and trade fairs also offers one of the richest urban experiences in the Americas. It is a place where migration shaped cuisine, where culture remains publicly visible, where modernism still feels alive and where the city's immense scale generates not sterility but variety.

For Chinese travelers who are increasingly willing to go beyond the most established long-haul routes, Sao Paulo offers something more substantial than easy fantasy. It offers a real metropolis.

That may be why the city feels newly timely.

Chinese visitors looking at Sao Paulo now are not simply looking at another faraway destination. They are looking at a city that broadens the map of what Brazil means: not only beaches and samba, but museums, immigration histories, high culture, nightlife, architecture and one of the world's most exciting food scenes.

It is the cumulative force of the place: the food, the art, the greenery, the sense of scale, the energy after dark, the neighborhoods that keep shifting register from block to block, and the feeling that the city is always revealing another version of itself.

Sao Paulo asks for curiosity more than certainty. It does not hand itself over all at once.

For travelers willing to meet it on those terms, it may prove to be not only Brazil's main gateway, but also one of Latin America's great city breaks.

Alfred Romann is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



An attendee visits the *Arts of Africa* exhibition during the official inauguration of the new building of the Sao Paulo Museum of Art on March 28, 2025. ISAAC FONTANA / EPA-EFE



People enjoy walking, running, cycling and strolling in Ibirapuera Park, in the southern part of Sao Paulo, one of the main outdoor leisure spots in the city. LECO VIANA / THENEWS2

> This is the year of Brazil in China and we have a plan of action that will further boost the interest in knowing our culture and our natural destinations, which today are the ones that most attract the Chinese."
>
> **Marcelo Freixo,** former president of Embratur, an international tourism promotion agency in Brazil

SPORTS



China's Shao Yuqi and Hu Linpeng, the respective high jump gold and bronze medalists from November's 15th National Games, both added a silver medal to their collections at the 2026 Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan province. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

2026 ASIAN BEACH GAMES





China's Hu Linpeng (top) and Shao Yuqi in action in Sanya, Hainan province, during the Asian Beach Games. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY AND XINHUA

Rising to the challenges of unique locale

Powdery sand and expansive arena combine to create a jump in difficulty

By **XING WEN**
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On a sunny Sunday on Sanya's Phoenix Island in the tropical island province of Hainan, the women's high jump final of the just-concluded 2026 Asian Beach Games drew a packed house at the athletics venue, and for good reason.

China's Shao Yuqi and Hu Linpeng, the respective gold and bronze medalists from November's 15th National Games, were both expected to add another medal for their country.

But the open-air setting, with swaying coconut trees and an expanse of azure sea dwarfing the competition mats, along with a sand-covered run-up area, would test them in ways a traditional stadium high jump setup never could.

"When you compete indoors, the mats and the bar look quite large. In a 400-meter open-air stadium, they shrink a bit. But, today, on the sand, they seem tiny. The sky and the background stretch out endlessly, so it's a very wide-open view," said Hu.

While spectators can enjoy a unique and picturesque experience — watching athletes arch their backs and float over the bar with the sea breeze — for the jumpers, adapting to this environment is a real challenge, because the vast, open setting messes with their ingrained spatial awareness, making technical mistakes more likely.

"The sand saps some of your energy, so you don't build up as much speed on the run-up. That means we have to rely more on vertical explosive power," Hu said.

The run-up takes place on soft sand, while the takeoff zone features a standard rubber surface, creating an abrupt shift in underfoot conditions. Compounding the challenge, sand inevitably spreads across the rubber.

"The surface is slippery when you take off, and there is a risk of injury. I tried to control my speed during my approach and adjust my steps. It was so hard," said Filipino men's high jump athlete Leonard Grospe in an interview following the first competition day.

During the competition, both Shao and Hu missed twice at 1.83 meters, before finally clearing it on their third attempts. After Uzbekistan's Barnokhon Sayfullayeva successfully made 1.85m, the two Chinese jumpers decided to skip their remaining tries at that height and moved straight to 1.87m. Unfortunately, they failed all three attempts, and both had to settle for silver.

"Of course, I'm disappointed not to win the gold, but I'm still proud that we Chinese athletes took home two silver medals — and congratulations to the gold medalist," Shao said.

"No matter what kind of venue we compete in, everyone faces the same conditions. As long as you give it your all, there's no reason to regret anything," Hu added.

As the high jump competition was wrapping up, the 4x60-meter relay races had already begun on the adjacent track, with the cheers from the crowd ringing out.

Yet, both jumpers said they didn't notice any of it — they were completely absorbed in their own performances.

That same ability to block out distractions has served them well off the field, too, especially in coping with the surge of public attention that followed the 15th National Games.

People haven't just been talking about their athletic prowess; more visibly, they've also been drawn to their striking good looks and toned, athletic physiques.

Seeing so many spectators come out to cheer for her, Shao said that all this public interest is actually a good thing for athletics.

"If people can focus that attention on the high jump, I'd be very happy," she said.

Now 24, Shao is a postgraduate student at Tsinghua University's School of Social Sciences and is often called a "beauty A-grader" by the public.

She finds it natural to balance her academic studies with her training.

Standing at just 1.75 meters — hardly an advantage for a female high jumper — Shao has strengthened herself by training more than 300 days a year.

She now has her sights set on this year's Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan.

This year is the Year of the Horse, her zodiac year, and she likens herself to a colorful pony.

"Compared to those tall, powerful horses, I might look small, but even the small have their own strength."



Brown University's Olivia Pichardo pitches during the ninth inning of a Division I game against Cornell last week. AP



Pichardo fist bumps Brown catcher Andrew Hanlon after getting the final out of their team's 16-4 win over Cornell last week. AP

BASEBALL

Pioneer Pichardo reluctant to steal team's spotlight

In her ideal world, Olivia Pichardo would just play ball and not take attention away from her teammates.

"Sometimes it feels a little ridiculous," she told reporters. "But, it's something I understand is going to happen. That's not what my primary focus is ever on."

Pichardo grew accustomed to being the only girl on her baseball team during her years in Little League, high school and travel ball. Four years ago, she tried out for the Brown University team, made it and, early in her freshman season, became the first woman to appear in a Division I game when she pinch-hit against Bryant University.

As a senior, last Saturday she became the first woman to pitch in a Division I game when she got the final out in a key win over Cornell.

"I feel like sometimes it might distract a bit too much from the success of our team," Pichardo said.

"We just made the playoffs for the first time since 2007, so that's a huge accomplishment, and I wouldn't want to take away from that."

Pichardo was listed as an outfielder and pitcher in her first three years, and focused only on pitching this season. The fact she stuck it out for four years might seem surprising. Brown has played 151 games since Pichardo arrived, and she has appeared in only six. She pinch-hit once as a freshman, once as a sophomore and three times as a junior, when she also played right field for an inning and caught two fly outs.

> "I've always been able to play at every level that I've progressed to, so there was never any reason for me to stop playing baseball just because I didn't see other women in the same space as me."
>
> **Olivia Pichardo,** the first woman to play Division I college baseball

Until Saturday, she hadn't appeared in a game this season, let alone warmed up in the bullpen. With Brown leading Cornell 16-3 in the ninth inning, coach Frank Holbrook's plan was to have little-used reliever Ty Harris get the first two outs and have Pichardo finish.

The 174-centimeter, 75-kilogram Pichardo has a four-pitch repertoire that includes a low-80s four-seam fastball to go with a sinker, changeup and curve. She entered with the bases loaded and threw two fastballs to Tyler Beaulieu, who grounded out to short to end Brown's 16-4 win.

Pichardo said she has never had any problem melding with her teammates. She prefers just being one of the guys and not taking spotlight away from the team. She does, however, understand the magnitude of what she's accomplished, not just in college, but also in summer ball. In 2023, she became the first woman to hit a home run in a summer league, connecting for Sag Harbor in the Hamptons Collegiate Baseball League.

"It's important for inspiring the younger generation of female baseball players, give them some kind of hope, I guess, that, if they want to play at the collegiate level, no matter what division, that door is open for them and it is possible," she said.

Pichardo, who graduates this spring with a degree in business economics, has been able to capitalize on name, image and likeness opportunities as the most visible woman in college baseball.

She's in her third year as an endorser for the baseball equipment and apparel company Warstic Sports, and she has a deal with Topps Allen & Ginter baseball cards.

Once Brown's season ends, she'll turn her attention to trying out for the United States women's team that will play in the group stage of the 2027 World Cup. She has been a regular on Team USA since 2022 and pitched against Japan in the 2024 World Cup in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Pichardo said she's been grateful for every baseball opportunity since her father signed her up for a league in her hometown of Queens, New York, when she was six years old.

"He didn't have any sons, so I like to say I was his designated son," she said. "I've always been able to play at every level that I've progressed to, so there was never any reason for me to stop playing baseball just because I didn't see other women in the same space as me. It was my first sport, my first love, and I knew I wanted to try and play at the highest level possible."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

SPORTS

SOCCER

Gunners shoot first, but Atletico returns fire

Arsenal and the Rojiblancos exchange penalties in Madrid, as Champions League semifinal first-leg ends in a 1-1 draw

Atletico Madrid and Arsenal exchanged penalties in a 1-1 draw in the first leg of the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday, a gritty encounter with plenty of intensity from start to finish, even if it lacked the fireworks of the nine-goal thriller that saw defending champion Paris Saint-Germain edge Bayern Munich 5-4 in France on Tuesday.

Viktor Gyokeres put Arsenal ahead at the Metropolitano stadium on Wednesday, converting a 44th-minute penalty kick before Julian Alvarez equalized for Atletico — also from the penalty spot — 12 minutes later.

The Gunners were awarded another penalty in the 78th minute after Eberechi Eze was brought down by David Hancko inside the area, but the call was overturned after a video review.

The second leg is in London next Tuesday, when both clubs have a shot at returning to the final after a long absence, giving whichever side makes it a chance to win the European title for the first time.

"Here, you have to suffer. Many teams have suffered here, including some of the best in the world," Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta said.

"We had some good moments in the match, and moments where we had to suffer. The margins are very slim. We are in an incredible position — the semifinal of the Champions League. Now, we have to play in front of our people — it's in our hands."

In the league phase of the competition, Arsenal routed Atletico 4-0 at the Emirates Stadium.

Atletico last made it to the Champions League final in 2016, when it lost to crosstown rival Real Madrid.

"We tried," Atletico midfielder Jorge Resurreccion said. "We went behind to that penalty, which was doubtful, but the team recovered and we were able to equalize with a penalty ourselves. We had the opportunities to win, but it will all be decided in the second leg. I think we played a good match."

Gyokeres broke the deadlock from the penalty spot after he was brought down inside the area by Hancko, who was a bit late to the ball and slightly bumped the Arsenal striker from behind.

The buildup came after Atletico lost possession in attack.

"Overall, I think it was a tough game, we know it's a tough place to come, but it's only halftime," Gyokeres said.

"We know that, when we play at home, with our fans, it's going to be different, for sure, and we just have to do our job, be at our best. It's going to be a good game at home."

Arsenal last appeared in the final in 2006, when it lost to Barcelona.

The Rojiblancos' equalizer came after a handball by Arsenal defender Ben White following a shot by Marcos Llorente.

The call came after a video review, and Alvarez converted the penalty with a firm shot for his 10th Champions League goal this season, before being replaced later in the second half with an apparent injury.

Gyokeres' opening penalty was Arsenal's first attempt on target, but both teams had exchanged a few early chances.

Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya had made a nice save on a shot by Alvarez, and Martin Odegaard — who was also substituted later — had his dangerous strike from inside the area blocked by Atletico's defense.

Alvarez led the Atletico attack early on, but the connection with Antoine Griezmann and Ademola Lookman didn't work well until the second half.

Alvarez almost curled in a free-kick after the break, and both Lookman and Griezmann had chances shortly afterward. Griezmann struck the post with a shot in the 63rd minute, and Lookman, who had been doubtful to start because of a muscle injury, missed from close range later in the second half.

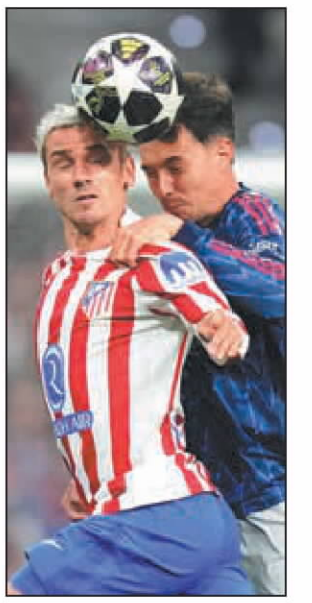
"We played a very good second half and had the chances to win the match," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said.

Griezmann, who played his last home Champions League fixture with Atletico, was named the player of the match.

The France star will join MLS club Orlando City this summer.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA





Left: Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez (second right) runs with the ball during Wednesday's UEFA Champions League semifinal first leg against Arsenal in Madrid. **Above:** Atletico's Antoine Griezmann (left) and Arsenal's Martin Zubimendi battle for the ball. **Bottom:** Arsenal players celebrate Viktor Gyokeres (left) scoring the opening goal. AFP / AP



Arteta infuriated by 'unacceptable' decision to overturn second penalty

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta called it "unacceptable", and said it was a moment that changed the course of his team's Champions League semifinal against Atletico Madrid.

Meanwhile, Atletico coach Diego Simeone's antics as Dutch referee Danny Makkelie studied the sideline monitor at the Metropolitano stadium came under scrutiny Wednesday.

In a white-hot atmosphere and the score locked at 1-1 in Madrid, Makkelie opted to overturn a second-half penalty awarded to Arsenal when substitute Eberechi Eze went down under a challenge from David Hancko.

"The whole sequence tells the story. I mean it's a clear contact," Arteta told TNT Sports. "At this level it's completely unacceptable."

The game ended 1-1 with the second leg set to take place at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium next week.

Arteta said Makkelie had reviewed the penalty incident 13 times before deciding to overturn his decision. Soccer's rules state decisions should not be changed unless there is a "clear and obvious error".

"You make that decision, you cannot overturn that decision when you have to look at it 13 times," Arteta added.

UEFA said the penalty was ruled out because no foul had been committed, despite replays showing clear contact between Hancko and Eze.

TNT Sports panelists Steven Gerrard, Martin Keown and Steve McManaman also disagreed with the Dutchman's decision to overturn the penalty, but they also pointed to Simeone's reaction on the sideline while the official reviewed the video.

"As the referee is coming over, before he's even looked at the screen, Simeone's in his face, he's waving his arms," said former Liverpool midfielder Gerrard. "Then, he's in his ear when he's at the screen. It's a performance, and he's the best at doing it."

McManaman, who played for Atletico's crosstown rival Real Madrid, said of Simeone: "His performance was terrible, and that's why people don't like the dark arts, or don't like Atletico Madrid."

Earlier in the game, Simeone and Atletico players complained about the penalty call that went against their team late in the first half. Viktor Gyokeres put Arsenal ahead by converting from the spot in the 44th minute. Julian Alvarez equalized for Atletico — also with a spotkick — 12 minutes later.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

MOTOR SPORTS

Antonelli chases hat-trick, as F1 season revs back up

MIAMI — Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli, the youngest championship leader in F1 history, will seek to complete a hat-trick of early season victories at the weekend, as Formula One returns after a month's enforced absence due to the conflicts raging in the Middle East.

The 19-year-old Mercedes driver, triumphant in China and Japan, leads teammate George Russell, who won the season-opening Australian Grand Prix, by nine points ahead of what is, effectively, the start of another season, complete with more revised rules and widespread car upgrades, at the Miami Grand Prix.

"After a month without any racing, we are ready to get back on track," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff.

"We've used this break to analyze the opening races, address our weaknesses and raise our level.

"We've started the season well, but that counts for very little if you stand still. We know our competitors will have used this time to improve and build a deeper understanding of their cars, so we expect the field to be closer in Miami.

"That's the reality of F1 — it's a challenge we must rise to."

Antonelli's early triumphs made him the first Italian driver since Alberto Ascari in 1953 to win two consecutive races. Ascari completed his treble that season.

Wolff also addressed the tweaks to the new regulations that will be introduced in Miami, aimed at making the cars, and the spectacle more natural, with reduced battery recharging in qualifying and increased super-clipping to reduce dangerous speed differentials.

He said the revised rules would "respect the DNA of our sport", and deliver an improved spectacle without any significant reduction to Mercedes' early-season performance advantage.



Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli is looking to snatch a third win on the bounce when the F1 season restarts in Miami on the weekend. AP

For Mercedes, Sunday's race is an opportunity for a first win in Florida since the event was launched five years ago. It has been won twice by four-time champion Max Verstappen for Red Bull, and twice by McLaren with a win apiece for reigning world champion Lando Norris and teammate Oscar Piastri.

'Completely new car'

They will harbor hopes of claiming points, too, with success in Saturday's sprint race, which was won last year by Norris.

Ferrari, however, is widely expected to be a strong contender when it arrives in Miami. Like McLaren, Ferrari is bringing an almost "completely new car", with a heavily revised package.

"It was one of our best tracks for pure pace, compared to others, last year," said Norris. "It's a different track, and it may still suit us a little more than others."

After winning in 2022 and 2023, Verstappen will be aiming to stop Mercedes' winning run and revive Red Bull's challenge this year after a discouraging start. He is ninth, on 12 points, 60 adrift of Antonelli, with teammate Isack Hadjar in 12th place on four points.

Ferrari's duo of Charles Leclerc and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton is third and fourth, respectively, on 49 and 41 points, with many paddock observers suggesting Ferrari is poised to fight for a first win since Carlos Sainz's success in Mexico in October 2024.

Leclerc's eighth and last win came in Austin, Texas, shortly before Sainz's triumph, while Hamilton is chasing his 106th win and first since the 2024 Belgian Grand Prix — before he joined Ferrari. After a desultory first year, the Briton said he is relishing the challenge of a new formula that has seen him rediscover his racing mojo.

"We're all recharged after the break," said Russell, expressing the feelings of most drivers.

"I'm hoping we can continue where we left off."

It will also mark United States newcomer Cadillac's first racing appearance on home soil when Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas venture onto the grid at Hard Rock Stadium in a new American livery.

AFP