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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2026

Stable Sino-US ties linked to global growth

Sound relations protect supply chains and support trade flows, say observers

By **ZHONG NAN**
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Expanded cooperation between China and the United States will help reinforce the stability of global industrial and supply chains, while generating fresh momentum in advanced manufacturing, premium consumption and innovation-driven industries, said analysts and business executives of both sides.

They also said that stable China-US economic ties are vital to safeguarding global supply chains, and the two countries have shared interests in sectors including frontier technologies that far outweigh any tariff game.

Companies are also eyeing emerging business opportunities, as the two economies remain highly complementary. China maintains strengths in manufacturing capacity, supply chain integration and industrial efficiency, while the US continues to lead in high-end consumption, technological innovation and service-related demand.

Da Wei, a professor of international relations at Tsinghua University, said that amid rising geopolitical and economic uncertainties, stable China-US economic ties are crucial to safeguarding global supply chains, supporting trade flows and strengthening industrial ties.

He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization, said the two countries should place greater emphasis on cooperation in artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies, as China and the US have enormous shared interests and opportunities in trade and investment related to open-source AI, big data, quantum computing, 6G, robotics, green transformation and biotechnology.

Speaking at a sub-forum of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2026 in Boao, Hainan province, in late March, Carlos Gutierrez, former US secretary of commerce, said the world would benefit from a more stable and constructive economic relationship between China and the US, with both sides ensuring that opportunities remain open and mutually accessible. If the two sides can find ways to manage differences and establish a framework for coexistence, it could provide a model for the global system, he said.

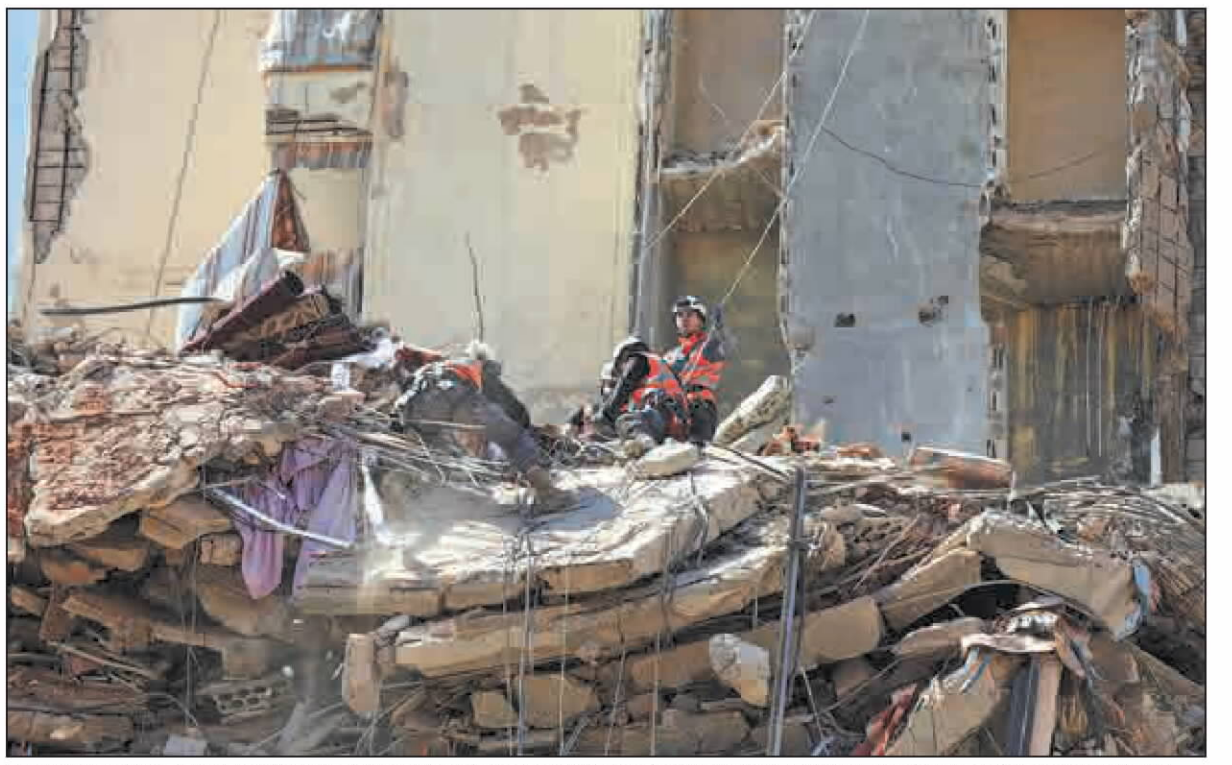
China's strategic role in the global supply chain and its vast market are becoming increasingly prominent for US companies. Nathaniel Madarang, president for Asia-Pacific region at Goodyear Tire & Rubber, said China is not just a market or a production base, but a vibrant market, a competitive manufacturing base and an innovation hub.

Noting recent visits to China by several US business leaders — including Ray Dalio, founder of asset management firm Bridgewater Associates, and Stephen Schwarzman, chairman of investment firm Blackstone Inc — Wang Guannan, spokeswoman for the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said that despite mounting external uncertainties, business communities in both China and the US continue to favor cooperation over confrontation, underscoring strong demand for deeper economic ties.

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Rescuers work on Thursday at the site of an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. Israel launched its first airstrike on Beirut on Wednesday since a ceasefire with Lebanon took effect in mid-April. MOHAMAD AZAKIR / REUTERS

Tehran, Washington inch toward limited agreement

By **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE
and **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong

The United States and Iran are edging toward a limited, temporary agreement to halt their war, Reuters reported on Thursday, quoting sources and officials, with a draft framework that would stop the fighting but leave the most contentious issues unresolved, even as US President Donald Trump said a deal to end the war was "very possible".

The Saudi Arabia-based news outlet Al Arabiya cited sources as saying that discussions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz are on, though there was no immediate confirmation from Iran or the US.

In another development on Thursday, Tehran denied attacking a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this week. The Iranian embassy in Seoul said Iran "firmly rejects and categorically denies" allegations that its armed forces were behind a blast on Monday aboard the Panama-flagged HMM *Namu*, with 24 crew members on board. Trump later claimed that Iran had "taken some shots" at the vessel and urged South Korea to join the so-called Project Freedom initiative to reopen the vital waterway.

Despite that incident, hopes of progress have emerged after weeks of stalemate.

"We've had very good talks over the last 24 hours, and it's very possible that we'll make a deal," Trump told reporters on Wednesday. But he warned earlier that if Iran fails to honor any agreement, bombing would resume "at a much higher level and intensity".

Launched by the US and Israel in late February, the conflict has seen Iran launch retaliatory strikes across the Gulf and impose effective control over the strait, roiling global energy markets.

Meanwhile, Iran is yet to formally respond to Washington's new proposal. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said the US aims to force Tehran to surrender through "a naval blockade, economic pressure and media manipulation designed to destroy the country's cohesion".

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei confirmed that the US proposal remains under review, adding that Tehran will relay its official stance to mediator Pakistan once internal deliberations are finalized, Iran's ISNA news agency reported.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday his country is ready to pursue diplomatic paths to end the war, while insisting on safeguarding the nation's rights.

In a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Pezeshkian voiced deep distrust of the US over recent provocative acts, including wartime strikes on Iran amid indirect negotiations.

US media outlet Axios, citing unnamed officials, reported on Wednesday that both sides were close to reaching a one-page memorandum of understanding to end hostilities and set a framework for future nuclear negotiations.

Meanwhile, Israel pummeled southern parts of Lebanon on Thursday, Lebanese state media and AFP correspondents said, a day after it targeted a Hezbollah commander in its first strike on Beirut's southern suburbs since a truce sought to end weeks of fighting.

The Israeli army said on Thursday that the strike on the southern suburbs killed "the Commander of Hezbollah's elite 'Radwan Force' Unit".

According to Mohamad Elmasry, a professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies in Qatar, Washington appears more serious about striking a peace deal with Iran, yet major questions remain over the concessions it is prepared to make.

The draft memorandum omits several longstanding US demands that Iran has repeatedly rejected, including curbs on Tehran's missile and nuclear programs. "That may be seen as a negative sign — the proposal fails to address some of Iran's core concerns in an acceptable way," Elmasry told Al Jazeera.

Prospects of a potential detente buoyed global markets. Tokyo's Nikkei index surged more than 4 percent on Thursday, leading broad gains across Asian equities. China's benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.48 percent on Thursday after gaining 1.17 percent the previous day.

Meanwhile, global oil prices slid to a two-week low on Wednesday, with benchmark Brent crude falling around 11 percent to near $98 a barrel at one stage.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

Human connections nurture long-term links with Africa

WORLD WATCH
By Balew Demissie

Over the past seven decades, China-Africa relations have expanded significantly, driven by growing trade, major infrastructure investments and closer diplomatic engagement. Platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation have played a key role in formalizing and guiding this partnership, creating mechanisms for sustained economic and political collaboration. Building on this foundation, it is now time to further strengthen China-Africa people-to-people exchanges.

Such exchanges represent a strategic shift toward a more people-centered relationship, recognizing that sustainable China-Africa relations require more than infrastructure, trade and investment; they also need strong social and cultural connections. This is closely aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes cultural renaissance, youth empowerment and knowledge exchange as drivers of long-term development.

Direct interactions between African and Chinese people build mutual trust, deepen understanding of each other's cultures, values and perspectives, and challenge stereotypes. These exchanges enhance academic and scientific collaboration, as universities and research institutions work together through joint studies, knowledge sharing and capacity-building initiatives.

These interactions also promote entrepreneurship, tourism and creative industries, generating new economic opportunities. Ultimately, they foster human connections that support long-term partnerships. From advancing the China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Plan to establishing 17 Luban Workshops in 15 African countries, China has helped train tens of thousands of skilled professionals, providing solid intellectual support for Africa's development.

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GUANGXI HAS BECOME A GREAT PLACE TO HANG OUT

Region's karst landscapes now a magnet for the world's climbing community

By **XING WEN** in Beijing,
and **SHI RUIPENG** and **ZHANG LI** in Guilin, Guangxi

The arch of Shegeng Cave rose before He Chuan, a 47-year-old climber from Beijing, like a stone cathedral dropped into the karst peaks of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. A winding path snaked through its vast opening and, 70 meters above, the limestone ceiling hung — raw, ridged, pockmarked with cavities and streaked with subtle mineral lines. For a moment, he simply stood still.

Then he saw natural handholds scattered across the wall, like a challenge laid down by Mother Nature. His pulse quickened. "I have found a place that could rewrite Chinese climbing history," he later recalled. He was right.

From May 2024, Chinese and international route setters began descending on the cave in the Leye-Fengshan UNESCO Global Geopark, working in three rounds to carve 110 routes into the living rock. Based on the Yosemite Decimal System, a grading system for rating the difficulty of the climb, the routes range in difficulty from a welcoming 5.8 to a savage 5.15b.

The hardest line is named She Diao (The Eagle Shooters), a 30-meter route up the inner left wall of the north entrance. It follows a steep, overhanging parabola that demands elite-level fingertip strength.

After completing the route, French climber Seb Bouin noted that the crux moves demand extremely difficult fingertip-pulling power. Yet when he paused and looked up through the cave's opening, he could see green mountains and drifting clouds. He said the climbing process is complex, but "enjoying the scenery while climbing" makes it utterly exhilarating.

Graded as China's hardest route to date, She Diao has vaulted Shegeng Cave in this remote corner of Guangxi into the world's top climbing destinations.

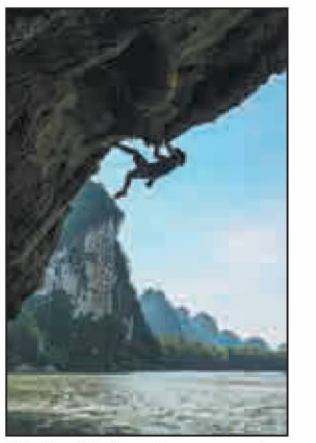
On May 15 last year, the cave officially opened as a pilgrimage site for enthusiasts chasing the planet's most extreme vertical challenges.

But Guangxi's rocks don't belong only to the elite. Further south, a different rhythm hums in the fabled karst landscape of Yangshuo county. Here, the stone is for everyone.

For generations, Yangshuo has been where the Lijiang River winds through arched peaks. Now, a growing community is swapping river cruises for chalk bags.

"For most Chinese and international tourists, Yangshuo is the true international climbing destination," said Liu Yongbang, vice-president of the Yangshuo Climbing Association. "It boasts routes for beginners, and intermediate and advanced climbers, along with a unique climbing lifestyle."

That lifestyle is a world away from the urban grind. Climbers from across the globe rent modest guesthouses or quiet rural rooms, hop on scooters each morning, and spend hours on the natural limestone faces. Once there, they practice moves, control the tightness of rope for partners, and swap route beta.



Climber Liu Yongbang ascends a steep rock wall in the mountains of Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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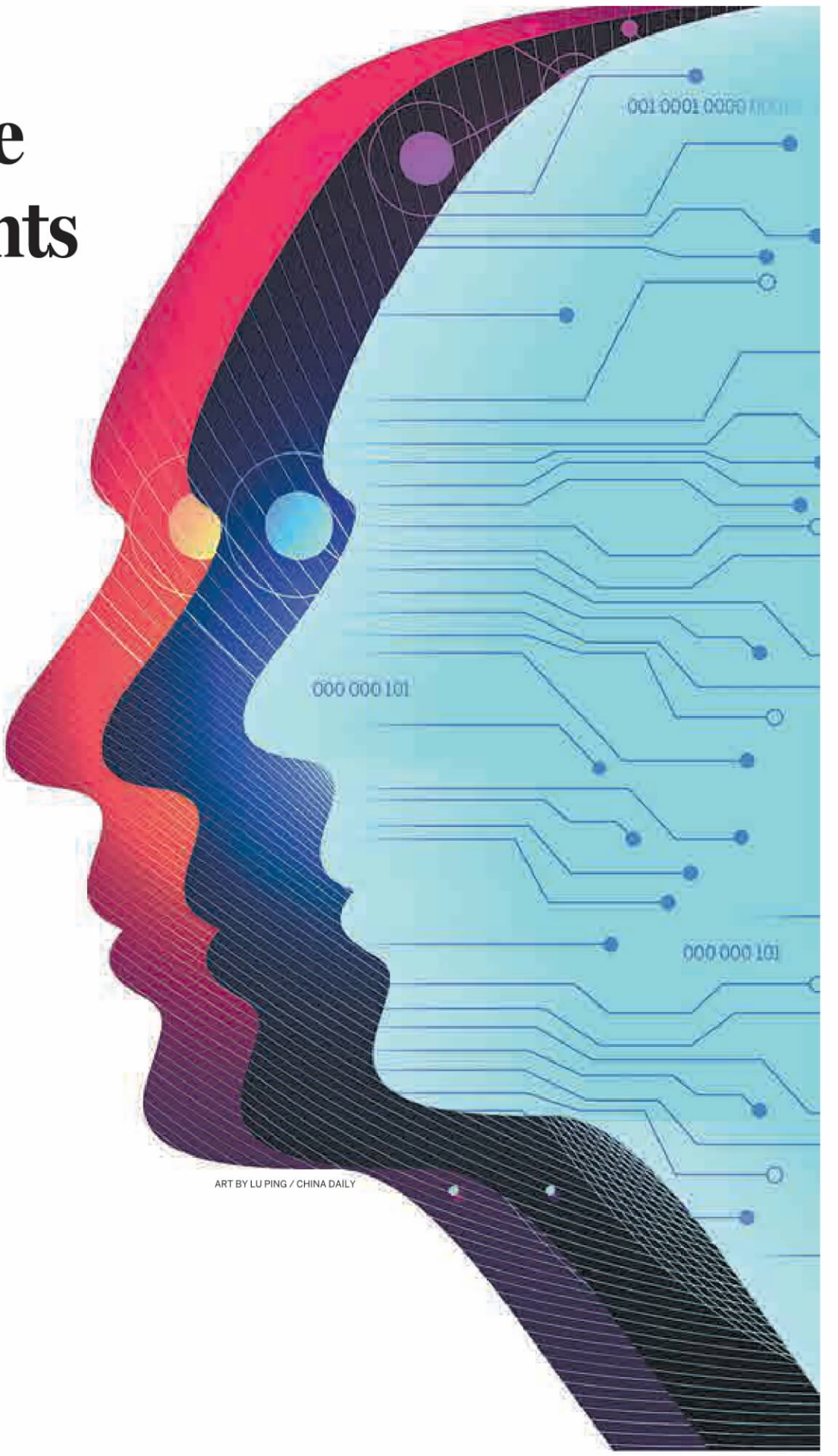
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INDEPTH

Face-off over AI dramas' illegal use of personality rights

Ethical issues in short videos and infringement complaints under scrutiny by courts, experts



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

By **CAO YIN**
caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming China's short-drama industry, significantly boosting production efficiency and output. However, this surge is also causing concern among actors, voice artists, and even ordinary viewers, as the ethical and legal implications of AI's capabilities come under scrutiny.

In late March, several bloggers, including models and devotees of traditional Chinese attire, accused a popular AI-generated series, *Peach Blossom Hairpin*, of using technology to replicate facial features, outfits, and makeup without permission. These characters were widely distributed on short-video platforms, sparking a debate about the ethical use of AI in media production.

As a result of these complaints, the micro-drama platform Hongguo removed the show and banned its producer from uploading new content for 15 days due to insufficient proof of compliance with regulations on facial imagery. The decision underscored the growing tension between technological innovation and personal rights, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and regulations, experts said.

This incident is not isolated. A number of celebrities, including actors Yi Yangqianxi and Yang Zi, have recently expressed their concerns, stating that they had never authorized the use of their images or voices in any AI-related dramas. They said AI-generated characters closely mimicking their appearance or voice constitute infringement.

Some cases have already reached the courts, with producers facing legal consequences for infringing upon personal rights.

Short dramas, or micro-dramas, typically shot in a vertical format with episodes lasting just a few minutes, have become immensely popular across China in recent years. By February, the short drama industry had 718 million monthly active users, with over 3,200 new short dramas released nationwide during the Spring Festival holiday alone, according to internet analytics firm QuestMobile. The explosive growth has been partly fueled by the convenience and accessibility of short-form content, which caters to the fast-paced lifestyles of modern audiences.

Generative AI is altering the production of these dramas. Industry analytics company DataEye reported that AI-powered animated shorts accounted for 38 percent of the top 100 comic-style dramas in January, up from 7 percent a year earlier.

The cost of producing a short drama has dropped from 50,000 yuan ($7,320) to 5,000 yuan per episode, and production time has been cut from two to four weeks to three to seven days. This dramatic reduction in cost and time has allowed more content creators to enter the industry.

However, the push for speed and cost reductions has led to mounting controversies. In the first quarter of this year, Hongguo removed 1,718 policy-violating animated short dramas, with 670 suspected of using people's facial information without consent.

These incidents highlight the challenges of balancing innovation with ethical considerations, as the technology outpaces the legal frameworks designed to regulate it. Legal experts said technological advancement should not come at the expense of personal rights.

More frequent

Zhao Qi, a judge at the Beijing Internet Court, said disputes over AI-related infringements of portrait and voice rights are becoming more frequent as the technology evolves.

Some defendants claimed they had used AI face-swapping technology just for fun, not profit.

But Zhao said that publicly broadcasting someone else's facial features without permission is prohibited under the Civil Code. "The distinction between personal use and public distribution is crucial, as the latter can have significant implications for the individuals involved," she said.

On March 23, the court disclosed details of a notable case in which Zhao ruled in favor of an actress whose images were violated by two companies that used AI face-swapping tech in a short drama. The court ordered the defendants to apologize on their video platforms and pay compensation to the actress.

The dispute began when the actress found her likeness mapped onto a character in a 90-minute drama, misleading audiences into thinking she had performed in it, and sparking online discussion. The series also appeared on another company's platform, leading her to sue both platforms for unauthorized, profit-driven use of her image.

Zhao said the production company argued the AI-generated character coincidentally resembled her. It claimed it only used prompts like "pretty journalist" without directly referring to her, and that the resemblance was "statistically probable". The production company said it quickly removed the segment after her complaint, causing no harm.

The streaming company argued that it legally obtained distribution rights and was not responsible for content creation.

However, when asked to demonstrate their AI production processes during the trial, the companies failed to do so due to technical and account issues, Zhao said.

"Even if an AI-generated face differs slightly from the original, it's still infringement if the public can recognize the person and no permission was given," the judge said.

"The streaming platform, despite having distribution rights, was also held accountable for failing to review content and prevent infringement."

Similar disputes have been ended through negotiation.

In March, for instance, an AI-generated fantasy short drama with over 23 million views sparked controversy for allegedly misappropriating a model's likeness and makeup style designed by a photographer. After the model, surnamed Ma, and the photographer filed complaints with the streaming platform, the series was taken down. Following negotiations, the two sides reached a settlement regarding compensation for the infringement of portrait rights and copyright.

Growing concerns

Only a year ago, AI-generated videos were rough, choppy, and visibly artificial, said Chen Peng, a short-video industry professional. They mainly consisted of single images or clips lasting just a few seconds, according to reports.

"But today, the technology has been completely transformed. It has leapfrogged in both the efficiency and quality of image and video generation," Chen said.

"Powered by next-generation large generative models, it can now produce complete short dramas with visuals, scenes, background music, and voice overs," he said.

"Thanks to breakthroughs in character consistency, long-text understanding, and fine-tuning by creators, the image quality, motion, and details are now virtually indistinguishable from real footage," he added.

The rapid development of technology has also lowered the barriers to becoming a creator and reduced production costs.

Zheng Ning, head of the law department at the Communication University of China's Cultural Industries Management School, said AI-generated short dramas can now achieve full-process generative AI coverage — from scriptwriting and character generation to scene rendering, voice overs and music production, editing and promotional distribution.

"This comprehensive integration of AI into the creative process is reshaping the industry making it more accessible, but also more complex," she said.

According to her, this compresses traditional film and television production timelines from months or even years to days or hours. With the barriers to entry removed, amateurs and tool providers — non-professionals — can also get involved in creation.

Zheng also pointed out that traditional film and television strictly follow a "review before release" principle, requiring creators and producers to go through a full process of content filing, review, and access approval, keeping the distribution scope and release cadence under control.

"But with AI-generated short dramas, the cumbersome review process has been simplified, enabling dozens of episodes to be updated in a single day, and hundreds of pieces of content to be generated in bulk, spreading extremely fast in cyberspace," she said.

The weak legal awareness of AI users has led to infringements of portrait and voice rights, Zheng said. Internet platforms, faced with the overwhelming output of AI-generated short dramas, have also failed to fulfill their responsibility to review content, while their review technologies still have significant shortcomings.

"Many platforms often rely on a reactive approach — removing content only after receiving complaints — rather than proactively identifying infringements. As a result, by the time an infringement is addressed, the short drama has already gained massive viewership and generated substantial revenue," she added.

Way forward

Zheng and Zhao both believe comprehensive governance of the short drama industry is needed, as frequent infringement issues not only violate creators' rights but also hinder the sector's long-term development.

"AI users should strengthen their legal awareness," Zheng said, advising them to conduct self-reviews to ensure their content does not infringe others' rights, and to obtain authorization before use.

"Platforms also need to prioritize preventive measures and provide easier reporting channels for users to protect their rights," she said. This could be achieved, she suggested, by enhancing the review process and applying cutting-edge technology to block infringing content more accurately and efficiently.

> "AI makes it easy to produce a short drama that 'looks good', but harder to create work that 'truly moves people'. This urges all creators to resist the inertia of algorithms and remain committed to observing humanity. The focus on the way of promoting the industrial development should shift from 'using AI to replace creation' to 'using AI to empower creation'."
>
> **Zheng Ning,** head of the law department at the Communication University of China's Cultural Industries Management School

Judge Zhao said platforms cannot shirk their responsibilities by using the high volume of uploads as an excuse. "Technological advancements have raised the legal duty of care expected of platforms as content distribution hubs," she said, noting that the increased responsibility requires platforms to adopt more sophisticated tools and strategies to manage content effectively.

Both Zheng and Zhao support platforms establishing more convenient complaint reporting systems, and taking stronger actions against users who repeatedly post infringing content.

Zheng proposed a blacklist for infringing parties and an industry ban on repeat violators.

She also emphasized stronger enforcement of regulations that require AI-generated content to be labeled and filed on record before release. Industry associations should also strengthen self-regulation, while technologies to detect voice imitation and face-swapping should be continuously upgraded, she added.

"AI makes it easy to produce a short drama that 'looks good', but harder to create work that 'truly moves people'. This urges all creators to resist the inertia of algorithms and remain committed to observing humanity," Zheng said.

"The focus on the way of promoting the industrial development should shift from 'using AI to replace creation' to 'using AI to empower creation'," she said.

By prioritizing human-centric storytelling, creators can harness AI's potential while preserving the artistic integrity of their work, she added.

Zhao said the courts will continue to balance technological innovation with the protection of personality rights, ensuring neither is compromised. This delicate balance will be crucial in navigating the future of AI in the creative industries, as both innovation and ethical considerations continue to evolve.

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TOP NEWS

Trade: Business with EU, ASEAN up

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With global trade flows changing and regional demand increasing, China's trade with the US dropped 16.6 percent year-on-year to $128.68 billion in the first quarter of 2026. At the same time, trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations rose 18.4 percent in US dollar terms, and trade with the European Union increased 17.6 percent, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Huang Kai, vice-president of Fujian Zhongjing Petrochemical Co, the largest private petrochemical company in Fujian province in terms of production capacity, said that stable China-US trade ties are important for the company to ensure operational stability and support steady business growth.

The company imported 308,000 metric tons of propane from the US in the first four months of this year, accounting for 34.8 percent of its total propane imports, according to Fuzhou Customs.

JAC Auto Parts (Ningbo) Co, an automotive parts manufacturer based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, counts the US among the company's core export markets. Its exports to the US rose 30 percent year-on-year to 40 million yuan ($5.88 million) in 2025, said Ningbo Customs.

Yang Weiguo, the head of the company's foreign trade unit, said, "The US is not only a major automotive market, but also one of our most important export destinations, and a key import source of core auto components such as rollers and anti-collision beams."

Guangxi: All levels of climbers welcomed

From page 1

In climbing, "beta" means a specific sequence of moves, holds and techniques used to complete a particular route. During evenings, climbers share meals and swap stories, living a slow, simple and voluntary life that binds a global community.

Liu is one of them. Born in Hengyang, Hunan province, he chose to settle in Yangshuo for its endless natural rocks and the promise of its climbing future.

"Yangshuo has gathered climbers from all over the world," he said. "Every Chinese climber who wants to learn outdoor climbing comes here. We have over 600 practitioners, 2,000 routes and 74 crags, and new routes are still being developed. Many experience their first ascent as visitors, then become climbers, and some eventually settle down as residents."

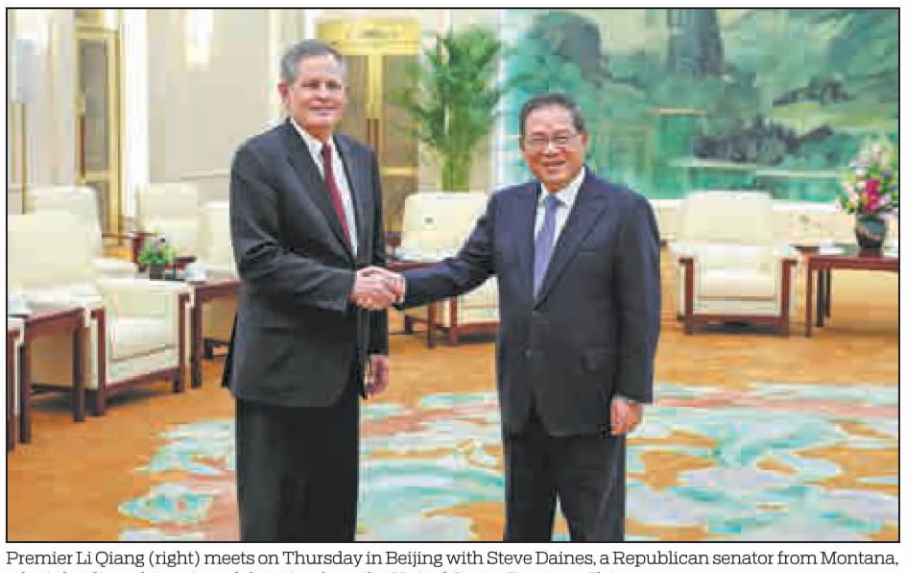
Foreigners can access most crags after registering with the local association. For beginners, Yangshuo's 37 certified clubs, all with high-risk operation permits, offer safe, reliable gateways into the vertical world.

Then there is 12-year-old Zhou Zhou, who arrived in 2024 from Changsha, Hunan, afraid of bugs, the sun and the dark.

Under Liu's instruction, she began to climb. A year later, her mother saw the change. "She has become brave and independent," her mother said. "It seems that the rock remakes her."

From the soaring arch of Shegeng Cave to the crags of Yangshuo, Guangxi's limestone is no longer just scenery. It is a canvas for human daring, a global crossroads, and for those who linger, a way of life.

Contact the writers at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn



Premier Li Qiang (right) meets on Thursday in Beijing with Steve Daines, a Republican senator from Montana, who is leading a bipartisan delegation from the United States Senate to China. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

China, US urged to work for more practical results

Premier, officials meet bipartisan delegation from Senate, call for strengthening dialogue

By **MO JINGXI**
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China called on the United States to work with it in the same direction, engage in more dialogue rather than confrontation, and pursue more mutually beneficial cooperation rather than zero-sum competition, as it hosted on Thursday the first bipartisan delegation from the US Senate since US President Donald Trump took office in 2025.

The delegation, led by Steve Daines, a Republican senator from Montana, is visiting Beijing and Shanghai this week to meet with Chinese officials and tour technology companies, according to a statement released by his office.

Premier Li Qiang and Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, met separately with the delegation on Thursday.

Li said that China is willing to work with the US to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, strengthen dialogue and communication, foster a favorable atmosphere for exchanges at all levels and cooperation in various fields, and strive for more practical results.

Experience has repeatedly shown that adhering to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation is the right way for the two major countries to get along with each other, Li added.

Zhao called on the US side to look at China and its development rationally and objectively, welcoming more US lawmakers to visit China.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who also met with the delegation on the same day, called on the two countries to stabilize and improve bilateral relations for the benefit of both countries and the world. "Face-to-face communication is the prerequisite for enhancing mutual understanding and the starting point for building trust," he said.

Noting that the visit carries symbolic significance, Wang said he hopes the delegation will experience the new dynamism of China's development, build new bridges of communication, explore new areas of cooperation, and inject fresh momentum into the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations.

"China's policy toward the US remains consistent," he said, emphasizing that the two countries should take mutual respect as the foundation, peaceful coexistence as the guiding principle and win-win cooperation as the goal.

Over the past year and more, China-US relations have experienced "twists and turns", but overall stability has been maintained under the strategic guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, Wang said.

"Since President Trump assumed office, President Xi Jinping has held multiple phone calls and meetings with him, helping to calibrate the direction of bilateral relations at critical moments," he said.

Wang noted that the key to finding the right way for China and the US to get along lies in continuously addressing misunderstandings in each other's perceptions, just like the first button of a shirt that must be placed right.

China and the US have different social systems and development paths, but both are rooted in their respective historical and cultural traditions and chosen by their own peoples, he said.

Quoting an ancient Chinese saying that "all living things grow together without harming one another", Wang said the two sides should seek "harmony without uniformity" and be partners rather than rivals.

China will not follow the obsolete model of a country seeking hegemony when growing stronger, he said, emphasizing that the country will remain committed to peaceful development and to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Members of the US delegation shared their impressions of the China visit and exchanged views on the development of US-China relations, according to the Foreign Ministry. The two sides also exchanged views on international and regional issues of common concern.

This trip marks Daines' seventh visit to China since he was elected to the US Congress. The senator last visited China in March 2025, becoming the first senior Republican to visit the country after Trump began his second term in office.

Diao Daming, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies, said, "If Trump comes to China as planned, Daines' trip takes place at an important preparatory stage and could be seen as a preliminary communication to convey positions for subsequent high-level interactions."

Diao added that the inclusion of Democratic senators in the delegation sends a positive signal that both US political parties still see value in strengthening communication with China.

Two former defense ministers given suspended death sentences for graft

By **YANG ZEKUN**
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

The Chinese military court separately handed down on Thursday death sentences with two-year reprieves to two former defense ministers of China over graft charges.

Wei Fenghe and Li Shangfu are both former members of the Central Military Commission and former state councilors. They were stripped of their political rights for life and all their personal assets were seized as Wei was convicted of accepting bribes and Li of both accepting and offering bribes.

The court rulings said that no further commutation or parole will be allowed after their penalties are commuted to life imprisonment in accordance with the law upon the expiration of the two-year reprieve period.

Wei, 72, a native of Shandong province, enrolled in the military in 1970 and joined the Communist Party of China two years later. He became a member of the CMC in 2012 and was appointed as a state councilor and minister of national defense in 2018.

In September 2023, disciplinary and supervisory authorities of the CMC launched an investigation into Wei for serious violations of Party discipline and national laws. It was found that he failed to fulfill his political responsibilities, resisted investigation, sought personnel benefits for others, and accepted large sums of money as bribes. Other serious violations were also identified.

The investigation statement said that Wei experienced a collapse of faith and a loss of loyalty. His actions betrayed the trust placed in him, severely damaged the political environment of the military, and caused significant harm to the Party's cause, national defense, military development and the image of senior leadership, it added.

Li, 68, a native of Jiangxi province, joined the CPC in 1980 and enrolled in the military two years later. He became a member of the CMC in 2022, and was appointed as a state councilor and minister of national defense in March 2023.

Li was placed under probe in August 2023. Authorities found that he failed to fulfill his political responsibilities, resisted investigation, violated organizational discipline by seeking personnel benefits for himself and others, and accepted and offered large sums of money as bribes. Other serious violations were also identified.

The investigation statement said that Li abandoned his original aspiration and ignored Party principles. His actions severely damaged the political environment within the military's equipment sector and the industry's ethos, causing significant harm to the Party's cause, national defense, military development and the image of senior leadership, it said, describing the nature of Li's misconduct as extremely serious.

The cases against Wei and Li were transferred to military procuratorial authorities for review and prosecution after they were expelled from the CPC in June 2024. Before that, the CMC had decided to expel Wei from the military and revoke his rank of general in the Rocket Force, and to expel Li from the military and revoke his rank of general in the Army.

A commentary published by PLA Daily in February said the military will continue to deepen political rectification and advance efforts to improve conduct and fight corruption. It said the task of removing the breeding grounds and conditions for corruption remains difficult and demanding.

The article added that the concentrated investigations into corruption do not indicate that corruption is worsening, but rather that anti-graft efforts are becoming more thorough.

Relations: Reinforcing societal connections critical

From page 1

In addition, China has signed bilateral tourism cooperation agreements with over 30 African countries, increasing the number of African destinations for Chinese tourist groups to 34.

At the 2024 FOCAC summit in Beijing, it was announced that China and Africa had agreed to designate 2026 as the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges. Following this commitment, the Chinese government released the "Concept Paper of the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges" in June 2025, highlighting the central role of the amicable ties between the people of both sides in strengthening bilateral relations. Throughout the year, China and Africa will organize nearly 600 activities across both sides, focusing on areas including education, technology transfer, youth exchanges, tourism and trade, and aligning people-to-people engagement with broader long-term development priorities.

As part of these efforts, Ethiopia and China are actively strengthening people-to-people exchanges, recognizing that education, cultural engagement, media collaboration and youth programs are essential to building a resilient China-Africa community.

Ethiopian viewers now have access to a variety of Chinese television content — including dramas, documentaries and animation. In addition, the China Film Festival, held at Addis Ababa University from March 6 to 28, provided a platform to deepen Ethiopian understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture.

Ultimately, resilient China-Africa people-to-people exchanges will be built not only by governments but also by students, artists, scholars, entrepreneurs and travelers whose cross-cultural connections create enduring bridges for sustainable, inclusive and mutually beneficial relations. Long-term alumni networks further strengthen diplomatic, business and policy collaboration. It is expected that both sides will assess the initiative's impact using quantitative indicators such as exchange programs, scholarships, cultural events, joint research projects, student mobility and academic partnerships, along with qualitative measures such as surveys on public perception.

Despite significant progress in China-Africa people-to-people exchanges over the past decades, practical barriers continue to limit these interactions.

First, language remains a challenge. Strengthening Mandarin proficiency in Africa and establishing African studies institutes in China are essential to bridging this gap.

Second, visa and mobility challenges — such as complex application processes, high fees, lengthy processing times and limited categories for researchers and cultural practitioners — further restrict travel.

Third, problems with travel and accommodation logistics, including online booking difficulties and the lack of integrated digital platforms, impede exchanges. Gaps in digital infrastructure — such as limited internet access and SIM card availability, and incompatible banking systems — further affect communication and the overall travel experience.

To address these challenges, both sides can expand language education by strengthening Mandarin programs in Africa, promoting African studies in China and supporting language exchange initiatives. Visa procedures should be simplified through digital applications, reduced fees for selected applicants and multi-entry visas for students, researchers, academics and entrepreneurs. Travel and digital infrastructure should be improved with integrated online booking platforms, reliable internet access, easy SIM card acquisition and accessible digital payment systems.

Deepening China-Africa connections requires a strategic, multidimensional approach that integrates education, culture, digital innovation and community engagement. Institutionalized scholarships, joint degree programs, visiting scholar exchanges, collaborative research and long-term academic, artistic and professional exchanges provide a strong foundation, while digital platforms enable virtual conferences, online cultural events and digital storytelling. Media cooperation through journalism partnerships, documentaries and forums fosters balanced narratives and cross-cultural understanding.

At the grassroots level, cultural festivals, artistic collaborations, sports exchanges and youth programs strengthen interpersonal ties. Key sectors for engagement include education, which drives knowledge production and professional development; culture and the arts, which deepen mutual understanding through film, literature and residencies; tourism, which encourages direct interaction and heritage preservation; youth engagement through leadership programs and innovation competitions; and community groups, which advance grassroots collaboration in public health, environmental protection and social development. Together, these strategies provide a comprehensive framework for sustained, people-centered China-Africa cooperation.

Now is a strategic time to deepen China-Africa people-to-people exchanges. Africa's growing youth population and largely agrarian society are eager for skills development, education and international exposure. Strengthening technology transfer and vocational training creates opportunities for mutual learning, while Africa's cultural industries and tourism sector offer significant potential for economic growth and cross-cultural exchange. At this stage, reinforcing societal and cultural connections is critical, as the future of China-Africa cooperation will increasingly depend on strong people-to-people exchanges, youth engagement and mutual understanding.

China-Africa people-to-people exchanges represent a forward-looking initiative that places human connections at the center of international cooperation. By promoting educational collaboration, cultural dialogue, think tank forums, youth engagement and media partnerships, Africa and China can foster relationships based on mutual respect, understanding and trust. As global challenges become more complex, partnerships must move beyond transactional interactions toward deeper societal engagement, emphasizing mobility, language learning and cultural exchanges.

The author is a communication and publication consultant at the Ethiopian Policy Studies Institute. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Protest in Seoul



Protesters call for the suspension of military cooperation between the Republic of Korea and Japan during a rally held on Thursday in Seoul against the first vice-ministerial-level security talks between the two nations. JEON HEON-KYUN / EPA

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WORLD

C-drama craze sweeps across Southeast Asia

Polished plots, fine costumes, cultural familiarity win over young viewers

By **YANG WANLI** in Bangkok
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese costume dramas are gaining immense popularity on Southeast Asia's streaming platforms, driven by polished production values and cultural familiarity.

In Thailand, conscription posters featuring characters from a historical romance series have gone viral on social media, highlighting the genre's growing cultural reach.

Recruitment posters, released by the Royal Thai Army on its official Facebook account a few weeks ago, highlighted characters from *Pursuit of Jade* — a recently released Chinese costume drama that boasts beautiful visuals and dramatic plot twists.

"Do you want a boyfriend full of heroic spirit like the Marquis of Wu'an in *Pursuit of Jade*? Ask your mate to join the cavalry!" read one of the posters referring to the male lead, Xie Zheng, in the Chinese drama. It earned about 100,000 likes online, with many praising the creativity involved.

Since its premiere in March, Google Trends showed that *Pursuit of Jade* ranked first in search volume for Chinese dramas across 15 markets, such as Thailand, the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore. The drama gained record-breaking popularity on iQIYI International, became the first mainland Chinese costume drama on Netflix's global non-English TV charts, and trended in multiple Asian regions, driven by strong viewer engagement and high MyDramaList ratings.

"I have followed Chinese dramas for years, and *Pursuit of Jade* is my latest favorite," said Amy Chen, 34, a Malaysian Chinese who works in Kuala Lumpur.

Apart from cultural proximity, Chen attributed her enthusiasm for Chinese TV series and short films to "opulent production design, actors' exquisite makeup and costumes, well-designed storylines, and high-quality streaming platforms".

Weaving traditional cultural elements such as Qin Opera and shadow puppetry, *Pursuit of Jade* showcases the unique charm of Chinese culture while its success serves as a microcosm of the growing popularity of Chinese dramas overseas.

China's export revenues from television series increased from $24 million in 2012 to $70 million in 2023 — an approximate threefold growth, according to a report by the Chinese National Radio and Television Administration.

Among the various offerings, costume dramas, one of the earliest genres to attract overseas audiences, continue to be the most popular type of Chinese television drama in the international market, according to the NRTA.

As a core market for Chinese TV series, Southeast Asia's growing market potential has attracted leading Chinese online video platforms such as WeTV, iQIYI, Youku and Mango TV to launch overseas services.

Following the craze for Korean dramas, their Chinese counterparts have won over a large number of Thai viewers in recent years, said Sirisak Koshpasharin, vice-chairman of Thailand's National Federation of Motion Pictures and Contents Associations.

In the past, he said, the older generations in Thailand loved classic dramas such as *Justice Pao* because many Thais were Chinese immigrants. "But what is more surprising is that a growing number of young people now also like Chinese series too," he said, attributing the new trend to cultural and lifestyle similarities between the two countries.

"Now many Chinese dramas have good stories, production value and hooks that make Thai people like them," Sirisak added.

Fertile ground

Apart from TV series, Southeast Asia's growing number of internet users also offers a fertile ground for the overseas expansion of Chinese micro-dramas, which commonly run one to 10 minutes per episode and series can run into hundreds of episodes.

According to data analytics firm DataEye, paying micro-drama users in the region last year increased by 28 percent year-on-year, solidifying the region as a core market with both commercial viability and a solid audience foundation.

Beyond entertainment, watching Chinese dramas or short films has also sparked interest among younger generations overseas in exploring China further, both online and in person.

"Chinese dramas as well as video products had a strong impact on me during my childhood," said a 21-year-old Thai college student, who wanted to be known only as Chompoo. A fan of the Chinese costume drama *My Fair Princess*, she now also follows *Pursuit of Jade*.

"I have never been to China before and really want to (visit) in the future. Its scenery, new trends and food are all attractive to me. China's technologies and innovations are also awesome," Chompoo added.

Kampol Piyasirikul, head of the Chinese Studies Program at Thammasat University, said: "Beyond TV series, boy bands, pop singers and fashion toys from China are also popular among young Thais. Such cultural exchanges will play an increasingly important role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust between the people of China and the rest of the world," he said.

Jan Yumul in Hong Kong and Jantarawan Thrakulphiw in Bangkok contributed to this story.

Beached giant



A man walks next to a dead sperm whale that washed up at Melaya beach in Jembrana Regency, Bali, Indonesia, on Wednesday. JOHANNES CHRISTO / REUTERS



OpenAI attorney William Savitt speaks outside a US federal courthouse in Oakland, California, on Monday over Elon Musk's lawsuit against OpenAI's for-profit conversion. MANUEL ORBEGOZO / REUTERS

AI risks loom over Musk-OpenAI trial

OAKLAND — Concerns over the risks posed by artificial intelligence have loomed large over a US trial pitting Elon Musk against OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman, even as the court focuses on a business dispute rather than the technology itself.

At the center of the case is the breakdown of a partnership once built on a shared goal: ensuring that increasingly powerful AI benefits humanity rather than any single company or individual.

Musk, a cofounder of OpenAI, filed the case accusing his fellow cofounder of breaking promises to keep the company a nonprofit. Altman, in turn, accuses Musk of trying to hobble the ChatGPT maker for the benefit of his own AI company, xAI.

The trial is being held in federal court in Oakland, California, and centers on the 2015 birth of OpenAI as a nonprofit startup primarily funded by Musk.

Both Musk and Altman have said they wanted OpenAI to safely develop artificial general intelligence for the benefit of humanity and not under any one person's control. Both camps allege that it's the other side that was trying to control it.

A jury of nine people selected from the San Francisco Bay Area will decide which side holds merit.

Early on, Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers warned lawyers, particularly Musk's team, not to turn the case into a broader debate on AI safety.

"This is not a trial on whether or not AI has damaged humanity," Gonzalez Rogers told lawyers before jurors arrived at the federal courthouse.

Still, Musk managed to skirt the judge's guidance in his testimony. Musk said he has "extreme concerns" about AI and has had them for a long time. "I was concerned AI would be a double-edged sword," he said.

Witness testimony has touched on concerns over AI risks, including workforce disruption, racial and gender discrimination, job displacement, misinformation and emotional attachments that take some AI chatbot users down a spiral of psychosis.

Musk also told the court he could have founded OpenAI as a for-profit company like his other ventures, but "deliberately chose this", saying, "for the public good".

The judge expressed skepticism, noting that Musk is now building in the same field through his AI company xAI, launched in 2023.

OpenAI's side also defended its position. Cofounder and president Greg Brockman, a defendant in the lawsuit along with Altman, said the technology under development at OpenAI was "transformative" and "about humanity as a whole".

Brockman testified that his No. 1 goal was always the OpenAI "mission", and that Musk sought unilateral control over the company. He recalled a meeting where at first Musk seemed open to Altman being CEO, but later, "he said people needed to know he was in charge".

Musk is seeking damages and Altman's removal from OpenAI's board. If he wins, it could derail OpenAI's plans for a potential initial public offering.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Guzheng combine tradition, innovation

By **MINGMEI LI** in New York
mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

As the hall fell quiet, the last few notes from testing strings slowly faded. Forty *guzheng* stood in staggered rows across the stage, forming a gentle arc under the lights. The polished wooden instruments caught the glow. The performers settled into position, some glancing toward the conductor, others keeping their eyes on the strings, waiting for the cue to begin.

The 40 *guzheng* players then performed in unison, their sound flowing as one and filling the hall with a powerful, continuous wave of music.

The special concert by the Gu Zheng Tianxia Ensemble, held at Olin Hall at the Bard College Conservatory of Music on Saturday night, at the end of the US-China Music Institute's eighth annual conference on Chinese music in the West.

This is one of the largest *guzheng* conferences in the United States, hosted by the US-China Music Institute at Bard College Conservatory of Music. The three-day program, which also kicked off celebrations for Asian Heritage Month, featured the sound of Chinese traditional music. The conference brought together renowned *guzheng* masters from China, musicians from across North America and young student performers for artistic exchange, collaboration and performance.

The name "Tianxia", meaning "under heaven" in Chinese, reflects the idea of connection across regions and generations, as well as the growing global presence of the *guzheng*, according to Cai Jindong, director of the US-China Music Institute and a professor of music and arts at Bard College.

The *guzheng*, one of China's most recognizable traditional instruments, typically built with 21 nylon-wrapped steel strings and movable bridges, has gradually expanded far beyond its origins, appearing increasingly on international stages.

The growing presence of the *guzheng* reflects both cultural continuity and contemporary relevance. With a long history in China, the instrument has become increasingly popular in China and the West, as musicians explore new techniques and forms of innovation while maintaining its traditional character, Cai said.

"The beauty of the traditional *guzheng* does not lie in the fixed notes themselves, but in the space between them like water flowing around stones, with its own curves, pace and movement," said Han Mei, a professor of music and director of the Center for Chinese Music Culture at Middle Tennessee State University.

"This reveals the essence of the instrument: the traditional left-hand techniques of the *guzheng* transform sound from a series of separate points into a continuous process. That is what fundamentally defines the *guzheng*," she said.

Influenced by traditional Chinese music, she added, Western contemporary composers have also incorporated this fluid approach to sound into new music, electronic music and electroacoustic works.

"I've always been drawn to the sound of the resonating strings," said musician and guitarist Kevin Barker, who is learning the *guzheng*. "It's very different from the guitar, where you fret the strings, so the notes don't overlap in the same way as they do with the *guzheng*. It's always been an interesting sound to me."

His daughter is learning the *erhu*, a traditional Chinese bowed instrument.

"So seeing the instrument presented in this kind of academic setting is really interesting. It is also interesting to see the rigor with which people are thinking about it," he said.

Wang Yixin, the first graduate of the *guzheng* major in Bard College's undergraduate dual-degree program, said that traditional Chinese music needs innovation and younger generations to help carry it forward.

"Many music groups in New York place a strong emphasis on traditional training, including classical repertoire. We need to innovate while staying rooted in tradition," she said.

Wang added that in the process of sharing the music more broadly, it is important to give audiences access to authentic traditions and help them develop a deeper understanding of the culture.

"The *guzheng* carries Chinese culture within it," said Yuan Sha, a *guzheng* professor at China Central Conservatory of Music.

"Seeing the instrument performed in so many different styles in the US, Western audiences are also able to feel the emotions and love conveyed through *guzheng* music. The emotion behind the *guzheng* is universal, and sincere emotion matters far more than technical skill," she said.

She added that Chinese *guzheng* performers and educators have conducted in-depth studies of the instrument, but these explorations should not be limited to China.

"We should have greater exchange and engagement with international musicians," she said.

Brussels talks on EU-US deal make no progress

By **JONATHAN POWELL**
in London
jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Facing US pressure, including tariff hikes on European cars, negotiators from the European Parliament and EU Council, who were trying to conclude the EU-US trade deal, made no breakthrough after six hours of talks in the Belgian capital on Wednesday night.

The European Parliament and the Cypriot presidency of the EU Council failed to finalize a deal to scrap EU tariffs on US industrial goods, as agreed by the European Union and the United States in the framework of current negotiations in Scotland last summer.

The setback comes days after Washington threatened 25 percent tariffs on EU cars, which are above the 15 percent cap on US tariffs for EU goods set by US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in the deal made in Turnberry, Scotland in July.

The Cypriot presidency said while exchanges produced "positive momentum" between the two sides, negotiators had made "progress".

With the US turning up the pressure, negotiators agreed to meet again in 10 days, reported Euronews.

EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic met US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on the sidelines of a G7 trade ministers' meeting in Paris on Tuesday and Wednesday, briefing him on progress toward scrapping EU duties on US industrial goods, which is now unlikely before June.

In March, the European Parliament approved the Turnberry accord with conditions, pending sign off by EU governments. On Friday, Trump accused the EU of breaching the accord and vowed to raise tariffs on cars, while also pressing the bloc to drop tariffs on US goods.

The EU said it was "fully committed to delivering on our shared commitments" and has kept Washington "fully informed throughout the process".

EU member states remain divided over the next steps, raising tensions within the bloc. As a condition for approval, European Parliament members are seeking safeguards, tying any EU tariff cuts to US compliance, plus a sunset clause that would end the deal in March 2028 unless renewed.

France backs adding safeguards, but a German-led bloc, including the Baltic states, Greece, Ireland, and Sweden, prefers last year's deal as agreed.

EU member states broadly agree on shielding the accord from future Trump threats, including those over EU cars or Greenland earlier this year.

The European Commission is pushing for a swift implementation of the EU-US deal, and there is added pressure from leaders of the conservative European People's Party, Parliament's largest group, who say businesses need certainty.

Cypriot Trade Minister Michael Damianos sought to reassure them, saying "the Council is committed to moving swiftly with the implementation" of the deal, adding, "We are fully committed to continuing our constructive engagement with the European Parliament."

An EU diplomat told Euronews the aim of Wednesday's meeting was largely to set out political positions, with technical talks to follow.

German socialist Member of the European Parliament Bernd Lange said, "We made good progress on the issue of the safeguard mechanism and the review and evaluation of the main regulation, but there is still some way to go."

Negotiators are now aiming for a new round of talks on May 19.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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WORLD

Airing dirty laundry



A worker hangs from a rope beside a billboard draped in discarded clothes during the installation of the *Baleboard* art project in Accra, Ghana, on Tuesday. Ghanaian artist Emmanuel Aggrey Tieku transformed advertising billboards into towering piles of textile waste to spotlight the environmental toll of fast fashion in a country flooded with millions of secondhand garments each week, many of which end up unsold in markets or dumped into landfills and waterways. CLAUDIA LACAVE / AFP

Briefly

BRAZIL

Chinese citizens to gain visa-free entry

The Brazilian government announced on Thursday that it will grant visa-free entry to Chinese citizens holding ordinary passports starting on Monday, Xinhua News Agency reported. According to a statement published by Brazil's Foreign Ministry, eligible travelers can stay in Brazil for up to 30 days per visit. The move follows an announcement in late January by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to grant visa-free entry for certain short-term visits by Chinese citizens, in what analysts viewed as a reciprocal gesture to China's own visa-free policy for Brazilian nationals. China's policy, effective from June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026, allows Brazilian passport holders to enter China visa-free for up to 30 days for business, tourism, family visits and transit.

UNITED KINGDOM

Voters cast ballots in local elections

British voters cast ballots on Thursday in local and regional elections that could shake up the country's politics and heap more pressure on embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Starmer's center-left Labour Party is bracing for big losses in polls that would choose about 5,000 local councilors and a handful of mayors across England, as well as semiautonomous parliaments in Scotland and Wales. They are the biggest set of elections since Labour swept to power in a landslide in July 2024. Polls would close at 10 pm (Friday morning, Beijing time). Some results were expected overnight, but most would not come until Friday.

FRANCE

Bill gets nod to return ill-gotten artifacts

The French National Assembly on Wednesday approved, following a new round of debate, a draft law on the restitution of cultural property acquired through illicit appropriation. The lower house of parliament passed the bill with 141 votes in favor and none against, though turnout was relatively low compared with the total 577 seats. The bill seeks to establish a clearer and simpler legal framework for returning cultural assets acquired by France through illicit means, including looting, theft and sales conducted under coercion. It applies to cultural property acquired between 1815 and 1972, excluding military items and certain archaeological objects.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA—AGENCIES

Japan's missile launch shatters pacifist stance

Move raises remilitarization fears and heightens regional tensions: Analysts

CROSS CURRENTS

By YANG RAN
yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn

Japan has, for the first time since World War II, fired offensive missiles on foreign soil, a move that experts say has effectively gutted the country's pacifist constitution and marks a critical escalation in its accelerating remilitarization, posing threats to regional stability.

During the "Balikatan" joint military drills with the United States and the Philippines on Wednesday, Japan launched Type 88 missiles overseas for the first time since the end of World War II. The exercise also marked Tokyo's first participation as a full member rather than an observer, with hundreds of Japanese troops deployed.

Lian Degui, director of the Center for Japanese Studies at Shanghai International Studies University, said the overseas deployment of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, alongside the use of offensive weapons, constitutes a major breakaway from the country's exclusively defense-oriented policy.

"This completely shatters the military red lines framed by Japan's postwar pacifist constitution and poses a major shock to regional peace," Lian said.

Da Zhigang, a research fellow at the Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Northeast Asian Studies, said Japan's live-fire use of offensive missile systems in a combat-simulated environment signals a fundamental shift in its military posture.

"This signifies that Japan no longer intends to remain merely a logistical or supporting role militarily, but hopes to possess active offensive strike capabilities," Da said. "This could disrupt the security balance in the Asia-Pacific and fuel a regional arms race."

Analysts noted that beyond military implications, Japan's use of domestically produced missiles also serves as a showcase for its military industry, aimed at attracting export orders and accelerating its military buildup.

Arms exports

Lian said arms exports are a key pillar of Japan's remilitarization strategy. "Increasing weapons sales can bring economic benefits while promoting the growth of the military-industrial complex, thus strengthening the country's overall military capabilities," he said.

Zhang Yulai, a professor at the Japan Institute of Nankai University in Tianjin, echoed the view, saying Japan has long sought to revitalize its military-industrial complex through expanded arms exports.

"Since former prime minister Shinzo Abe's second term, Japan has steadily chipped away at restrictions on weapons exports, trying to revive its military-industrial complex and profit from the business of war," he said.

The drill is the latest in a series of moves that reflect Japan's accelerating remilitarization. Last month, Tokyo revised the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, along with related implementation guidelines, to allow overseas sales of weapons, including those with lethal capabilities.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has also reaffirmed her intention to revise the constitution, particularly Article 9, the clause widely regarded as the cornerstone of Japan's postwar pacifist stance.

"Japan is systematically hollowing out its pacifist constitution through a series of legal revisions, breaking through the military constraints established under the postwar international order," Da said. "This expansionist military tendency raises the risk of regional disputes and undermines peace and development in the Asia-Pacific."

The pattern of exchange and cooperation built in Northeast Asia over recent decades may be replaced by challenges and friction, he said. "Many actions by the Japanese government have effectively opened Pandora's box for the revival of militarism, which has aroused high vigilance from the international community."

Commenting on Japan's overseas missile launch, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian warned on Wednesday that right-wing forces in Japan are pushing for accelerated remilitarization.

"The serious lack of education on true history, the fundamentally wrong historical views, compounded by strategies for military rearmament and preparation for war, have led to the malevolent emergence of neomilitarism in Japan and put regional peace and stability under threat," Lin said.

Da said Japan's historical revisionism, coupled with its arms modernization efforts and overseas troop deployments, is eroding trust among people in the region and the world.

Xinhua contributed to this story.



Beating the heat

A white lioness bites into a block of ice packed with meat treats to cool off during a heat wave in Guadalajara, Mexico, on Wednesday, as temperatures climb to 37 C. Zoos across Mexico have been giving animals frozen food blocks to help them endure the extreme heat. ULISES RUIZ / AFP

Canadian firms eye new opportunities under 15th Five-Year Plan

By YANG GAO in Toronto
gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) is prompting renewed interest among Canadian businesses as companies reassess opportunities in sectors including energy, agriculture and advanced technology, speakers at a Toronto business forum said.

The event, hosted by the Canada China Business Council on Wednesday, brought together business leaders and officials to discuss how China's development blueprint could transform commercial engagement between the two countries.

"We are entering a new phase after several years of uncertainty," said Bijan Ahmadi, executive director and chief operating officer of CCBC.

"Companies are once again exploring opportunities and looking more seriously at where engagement, market demand and policy priorities are beginning to align," he said.

Ahmadi said the relationship between Ottawa and Beijing has "shifted" since Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney formed government last year.

"Canada has re-engaged with China and started the process of recalibrating bilateral ties toward a more pragmatic and constructive relationship.

"This engagement has already contributed to stronger trade performance and renewed business confidence," he said.

Luo Weidong, Chinese consul general in Toronto, described the new five-year plan as "a treasure trove of development opportunities in China".

"The plan is not only a growing blueprint for China's economic and social development over the next five years, but also a guiding document that clarifies national strategy, identifies government priority, and guides and regulates the behavior of market entities," Luo said.

Both Luo and Ahmadi said China and Canada remain economically complementary, with businesses in both countries continuing to seek new areas of cooperation.

"Complexity is not a reason to disengage. It is a reason to be more precise," Ahmadi said.

He said Canadian companies need to understand "where opportunities are real, where constraints remain, and where commercial strategies can align with policy priorities and market demand".

According to Ahmadi, three themes in the 15th Five-Year Plan are especially relevant for Canadian businesses: high-quality growth, food and energy security, and stronger domestic consumption.

"These priorities translate into real opportunities," he said. "They reinforce the value of quality, reliability, safety and technical expertise, and the trustworthiness associated with Brand Canada in the Chinese market."

Luo also highlighted energy cooperation as a major area for future growth.

"Against the backdrop of the Iran crisis, there is both necessity and urgency to deepen cooperation in this field," Luo said.

He said China's next development phase would prioritize "the clean and efficient utilization of fossil fuels" while accelerating development of solar, wind, hydrogen and nuclear power.

Ahmadi noted that Canada's expanding export infrastructure could support deeper engagement with Asian markets, including China.

"Developments such as the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, LNG Canada and several ongoing and upcoming energy projects are enabling increased flows of crude oil, LNG and LPG to Asia, with China among the leading Asian destinations for Canadian energy products," he said.

He added that China's decarbonization goals are also creating opportunities for Canadian companies specializing in carbon capture, methane reduction and environmental services.

Agriculture and food security emerged as another major focus.

"Canada's high-quality agricultural products, meats and seafood will enjoy expanded market opportunities," Luo said.

Ahmadi said Chinese demand is increasingly shifting toward "premium, safe, traceable and reliable food products".

"For Canadian producers, this means opportunities to re-establish and expand market access in areas such as canola, seafood, beef, pork, pulses, grains and other high-quality food products," he said.

Beyond commodities, he said Canadian firms could also compete through "traceability systems, product customization, nutrition and wellness food products".

The speakers also pointed to growing opportunities tied to changes in China's demographic structure and the expansion of its middle class.

Luo said sectors including eldercare, childcare, tourism and cultural consumption could become "new blue oceans" for Canadian investment.

Ahmadi similarly said demand in China is increasingly shifting toward "trusted and premium products and services".

"China's aging population is also creating new needs in healthcare services, rehabilitation, elder care, insurance, wealth management and pension-related services," he said.

On advanced manufacturing and emerging industries, Luo said sectors such as quantum technology, aerospace, hydrogen energy and sixth-generation mobile communications could become major new growth drivers.

29 passengers got off ship after 1st hantavirus fatality

THE HAGUE — More than two dozen passengers left a cruise ship hit by a deadly hantavirus outbreak on April 24 without contact tracing, nearly two weeks after the first passenger died on board, the ship operator and Dutch officials said on Thursday.

The news raised concerns that the virus could spread as travelers returned home, though experts say the risk to the wider public is considered low.

The Netherlands-based operator, Oceanwide Expeditions, had previously said the body of the Dutch man who died on April 11 was taken off the ship on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena on April 24, when his wife also disembarked. She then flew to South Africa a day later and died there.

The company said on Thursday that 29 passengers left the vessel at St. Helena, while the Dutch Foreign Ministry put the number at about 40. The company had not previously acknowledged that dozens more left the ship at that time.

The World Health Organization said on Thursday it had informed 12 countries that its nationals had disembarked the ship on St. Helena.

The first confirmed case on the ship was only on May 2, the WHO had previously said. That was in a British man evacuated from the ship to South Africa from Ascension Island three days after the St. Helena stop.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Thursday that there were now five confirmed hantavirus cases from the outbreak, with three more suspected, and warned more cases were possible.

The vessel is now sailing to Spain's Canary Islands, a voyage that is expected to take three or four days, with more than 140 passengers and crew members still on board.

Authorities in South Africa and Europe are trying to trace contacts of any passengers who previously got off the ship.

It emerged on Wednesday that a man tested positive for hantavirus in Switzerland after he also disembarked at St. Helena and flew home, though his precise movements are not clear.

Dutch authorities did not confirm where other passengers who disembarked are now.

The WHO said on Thursday it expected the hantavirus outbreak on the ship to be "limited", as long as public health measures and "solidarity" are implemented.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

US should reciprocate China's readiness to work to stabilize and improve relations

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, top lawmaker Zhao Leji and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate meetings with a bipartisan delegation of US senators led by Republican Senator for Montana Steve Daines in Beijing on Thursday.

The three meetings conveyed a consistent message from the Chinese side: China and the United States should strengthen communication, properly manage differences and work toward a stable and healthy bilateral relationship.

At a time when uncertainty continues to cast long shadows over the world economy, stable China-US relations bear directly on the well-being of the peoples of both countries and on world peace and prosperity.

It was emphasized in the meetings that the key to stable relations is to keep working on bridging the perception gaps between the two sides. The two countries should endeavor to seek "harmony without uniformity" and choose to be partners instead of rivals.

Since Daines' previous visit to China in March 2025, considerable changes have taken place in not only China-US relations but also the broader international situation.

Through their direct interactions with the Chinese side and firsthand observations in China, the members of the delegation have had an opportunity to better appreciate the importance of China-US ties and the vital role both countries can play in promoting global stability and development.

In his meeting with the US delegation, Li expressed China's readiness to enhance dialogue and communication, and create a favorable atmosphere for exchanges at all levels and cooperation in various fields, so as to strive for more practical achievements between the two countries.

It was stressed in the meetings that the Taiwan question is the first and inviolable red line in China-US relations.

Both the US legislature and government should realize that the Taiwan question concerns the very core of China's core interests and constitutes the bedrock of the political foundation of China-US relations. China's resolve to safeguard its territorial integrity is unwavering and must not be underestimated. If the US side really cares about peace across the Taiwan Strait, it should stop sending wrong signals to the "Taiwan independence" forces on the Chinese island.

Adhering to the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiques, as well as honoring the commitments made by successive US administrations regarding the Taiwan question, are prerequisites for the stable development of Sino-US relations. These are international obligations that the US side must fulfill.

Li urged the US lawmakers to bear in mind the broader interests of China-US friendship and cooperation, and view and handle China-related issues with prudence, thereby playing a constructive role in the sustainable development of bilateral relations.

Zhao signaled the willingness of China's top legislature to strengthen engagement with the US Congress, facilitate increased exchanges and mutual visits, extending a welcome to more US lawmakers to visit China.

It is hoped that the US senators, who play a key role in influencing US lawmaking and policymaking, will view China objectively, understand China rationally, respect China's core interests earnestly, manage differences properly and join hands to do more major, practical and good things that are beneficial to both countries and the world, as Wang stressed.

The visiting US senators should comprehend Beijing's stance that mutual respect is the foundation for bilateral ties, peaceful coexistence the guiding principle and win-win cooperation the objective. The hard-won stability in bilateral relations should be cherished, so that the two sides can work together to explore a proper way for major countries to get along with one another.

Regulatory overreach masks EU's malaise

The European Union's instinctive response to technological anxiety is paperwork, suspicion and the politicizing of economic relationships.

The latest manifestation of this tendency is a revised EU Cybersecurity Act proposed by the European Commission, which would allow Brussels to classify certain countries as states of "cybersecurity concern" and designate companies as "high-risk suppliers" based on vaguely defined "non-technical risks". Suppliers from targeted countries could effectively be excluded from entire supply chains across 18 critical sectors.

This is nothing more than pride and prejudice.

According to a report released by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU and KPMG on Wednesday, replacing Chinese equipment under the proposed framework could cost the EU as much as €367.8 billion ($432.6 billion) over the next five years. That is equivalent to the GDP of a mid-sized EU economy. Yet Brussels appears willing to absorb the economic pain in pursuit of a strategic doctrine that remains deeply subjective.

The problem lies in how the EU is defining risk. Technical vulnerabilities can be tested, audited and corrected. "Non-technical risks", by contrast, are inherently ambiguous and elastic. Once security becomes detached from verifiable engineering standards, regulation risks becoming an ideological instrument.

As a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said, the draft law introduces arbitrary standards that weaponize supply chains under the banner of "security", while undermining the principles of market competition and nondiscrimination that the EU itself once championed.

If "high-risk supplier" becomes a geopolitical label, rather than a technical assessment, then any foreign company can theoretically be excluded at any moment in accordance with which way Brussels decides the political wind is blowing.

Former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi's warnings about the EU's competitiveness crisis — a widening productivity gap, slow growth and weakening industrial power that risk a "slow and agonizing death" of the EU's economic model — have not been subtle. Yet they have not been heeded.

Instead, Brussels increasingly behaves like "a regulatory overlord" presiding over a shrinking estate that is being sold off to pay for the upkeep of the manor. The EU is already struggling with sluggish growth, industrial erosion, energy insecurity and declining global competitiveness. It should pause before traveling too far down this road.

As the EU is debating sweeping supplier exclusions, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul has reportedly advanced proposals for broad institutional reform within the EU itself, arguing that Europe must adapt more effectively to geopolitical and economic realities. It can't keep centralizing more regulatory authority while becoming further detached from industrial realities.

Some of the EU's lawmakers appear astonishingly distant from the sectors they regulate. Technology legislation is frequently written through the narrow lens of political symbolism rather than operational practicality. Industrial policy becomes performance geopolitics. Business considerations become moral theater.

The consequences are visible. The EU wants green transition leadership while burdening manufacturers with costs competitors do not face. It wants digital sovereignty while depending heavily on imported technologies. It wants strategic autonomy while reducing supplier diversity. The contradictions grow sharper with each new regulatory package it unveils.

The revised EU Cybersecurity Act risks becoming another example of the EU confusing strategic caution with economic self-harm. The irony would be particularly acute in telecommunications and digital infrastructure. Chinese suppliers became deeply embedded in the EU's markets thanks to their high cost-performance and proven reliability. Retrofitting or dismantling large portions of these systems will not magically create stronger European alternatives overnight. It will simply increase the costs for consumers, delay infrastructure upgrades and deepen Europe's investment burden during a period of already weak economic momentum.

The EU speaks the language of openness while practicing selective exclusion. That inconsistency damages its credibility in the world market, where many emerging economies see growing European enthusiasm for "de-risking" as little more than a softer euphemism for economic protectionism.

There is a distinction between rigorous standards and politically expandable categories that can be stretched to fit shifting strategic anxieties. Brussels should reconsider the most problematic aspects of the draft law: the designation of countries of "cybersecurity concern", the ambiguous "non-technical risk" criteria and the sweeping restrictions attached to "high-risk suppliers".

If the EU truly wishes to adapt to a harsher global era, it must reconnect its policymaking and lawmaking with economic realities rather than ideological abstraction. Otherwise, the EU may discover too late that its greatest vulnerability was not foreign technology but its regulatory addiction.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

FIFA pricing risks alienating premium product-making fans

The 2026 FIFA World Cup has already been sold as the biggest ever: 48 teams, three host nations, a projected $13 billion in revenue and a corporate footprint sprawling across North America like a traveling trade expo. Somewhere in between lies the faint outline of an actual soccer tournament, watched by actual people, many of whom are increasingly being priced out of it.

It is as if FIFA were standing in the middle of the world's most popular sport like a luxury landlord rattling a velvet donation bucket insisting that the rent must go up again because demand is "historic".

Negotiations over China's broadcasting rights for the 2026 World Cup remain stalled, with FIFA demanding $300 million, 17 times what it is charging India, a country with a comparable population. This despite the fact that China's men's national team did not qualify. That absence alone dramatically alters the economics of the tournament in China. Without the Chinese team, domestic enthusiasm has inevitably softened. Advertisers know this. Sponsorship appetite has cooled. The longer FIFA clings to fantasy valuations, the more sponsors will simply turn their attention elsewhere.

Besides, this is not 2002, when families gathered around television sets at dawn, or even 2010, when live broadcasting still held sway. The death of CNN founder Ted Turner on Wednesday is itself an elegy for the decline of the television network. Chinese viewers now consume soccer through fragmented streams, mobile highlights, social clips and flexible digital platforms. Younger audiences are perfectly comfortable catching goals after they have been scored rather than sacrificing sleep for group-stage kickoffs. In that environment, FIFA's pricing model looks more like figures plucked out of the ether.

There is another layer of absurdity here. Chinese journalists have reportedly faced prolonged visa delays that have prevented many outlets from securing on-site studios, commentary positions and working facilities in time for the tournament, which kicks off in the United States on June 11. Reduced access inevitably means reduced broadcast quality. Yet FIFA still appears determined to charge champagne prices for watered-down beer.

And then there are the tickets.

This week the FIFA chairman defended soaring World Cup ticket prices by arguing they reflect the US market. It's difficult to track exact 1994 US World Cup ticket prices, but according to ESPN, prices ranged from $25 to $475 per match. For the final between Brazil and Italy, some tickets exceeded $1,500. Adjusted for 2026 inflation, that means tickets roughly ranged from $55 to $1,050, with the final costing the equivalent of about $3,300 today. In sharp contrast, attending eight matches at the 2026 World Cup (one per round) costs roughly $6,900 for the cheapest category tickets — and up to $16,400 for the most expensive, as per BBC Sport.

Soccer has always sold dreams. FIFA has decided to sell exclusivity instead. This is the danger of overcommercializing a sports spectacle. The World Cup is not the Super Bowl. It is not Coachella with shin pads. It belongs, at least morally, to billions of people who invest themselves emotionally in the game every four years.

FIFA should understand the risks of overestimating its hand. This is, after all, the same organization whose recent history includes the 2015 FIFAgate, a scandal that revealed systemic bribery, opaque governance and industrial-scale self-interest inside soccer's ruling structures. Yet the institution survived, repainted itself in the language of reform, then resumed accumulating money with renewed enthusiasm.

Which raises the obvious question. Who watches over FIFA now?

Because soccer governance increasingly resembles a closed financial ecosystem answerable mainly to itself. Even former insiders have openly criticized FIFA's lack of accountability.

The World Cup should be the great festival of sport for the world. Instead, FIFA risks transforming it into a gated premium product wrapped in the rhetoric of global unity.

China's broadcasters are right to resist unrealistic pricing. Fans everywhere are right to complain about ticket costs. And FIFA would do well to remember a simple truth: soccer made FIFA rich. FIFA did not make soccer beloved.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

APEC crucial cohesion platform in Asia-Pacific

Editor's note: *The second Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Senior Officials' Meeting and related events will be held in Shanghai from Monday to May 19. People's Daily Overseas Edition spoke to Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for World Trade Organization Studies at the University of International Business and Economics, and Zhang Jingjia, an associate researcher at the APEC Study Center of Nankai University, on China's role in the forum. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

At a time when geopolitical conflicts are disrupting global value chains and multilateral mechanisms are under strain, APEC is one of the few frameworks where economies can still sit down together to discuss trade and economic cooperation pragmatically. This gives the mechanism practical significance.

By promoting upgraded connectivity initiatives and striving for tangible results in physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity, APEC economies can better withstand external shocks and enhance regional economic resilience.

At the same time, APEC can accelerate the green and innovation-driven transformation across the region. Greater cooperation in clean energy, green minerals and environmental protection will help member economies move toward smarter, greener and more digital growth while reducing dependence on traditional fossil fuels. Innovation-led transformation is essential for the long-term sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific. It can also create new engines of growth in times of uncertainty.

The Asia-Pacific region still holds enormous potential for economic growth and trade cooperation. China is the largest trading partner for nearly all the APEC members, giving it an important role in regional cooperation. Despite frictions between China and the United States and Japan, economic and trade ties remain a vital bridge. They continue to play an irreplaceable role in maintaining relations and supporting regional stability.

In this context, APEC serves as both a stabilizer and a source of cohesion for the Asia-Pacific region. More importantly, it provides a valuable platform for leaders and officials at different levels to engage in practical discussions and sustained communication. Even when differences and disputes persist, dialogue remains essential to regional stability and economic certainty. This is precisely why APEC's role cannot easily be replaced.

China's three priorities for APEC 2026 — openness, innovation and cooperation — can help reinforce the focus on regional shared development. They also reflect both China's strengths and its vision for the future of APEC and the wider world.

The country has demonstrated a firm commitment to expanding opening-up through a series of concrete measures this year. It is also a strong supporter of the multilateral trading system and the World Trade Organization. Regarding innovation, China has become one of the world's major innovation hubs, particularly in manufacturing, and is well-positioned to contribute more to APEC's innovation-driven development. When it comes to cooperation, China has consistently advocated partnership rather than confrontation, a position that aligns closely with APEC's core principles.

Although China remains a developing country, it is making tangible contributions to global development and regional prosperity by expanding market access, increasing outward investment, deepening supply chain cooperation and strengthening technological collaboration. It also advocates stronger connectivity and more resilient supply chains.

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Contact us at:

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 692 0900 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

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VIEWS

Jiang Jianguo

China's right path to human development

China is promoting the well-rounded personal development of its people and the all-around advancement of human rights. These goals were part of the Communist Party of China Central Committee's recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), as well as the plan's outline approved by national lawmakers.

Together, the two documents provide guidance for the country to put into practice the idea that "living a happy life is the primary human right".

"Putting the people first" is the fundamental principle guiding China's pursuit of well-rounded personal development of the people and advancement of human rights in all fields in the new era.

Chinese modernization is ultimately measured by the growth and development of the people. Its purpose is to stimulate the people's initiative and creativity by enhancing their capabilities and competence.

Promoting well-rounded personal development essentially means following a people-centered approach and upholding the commitment to respect, empower and support the people and facilitate their progress while advancing human rights.

Human rights are interdependent and must be advanced comprehensively through a systematic approach.

China's pursuit of all-around advancement of human rights is reflected in its efforts to build a human rights protection system covering all fields, improve the protection of all rights, and channel more public resources into core areas of personal development.

Both the recommendations for the 15th Five-Year Plan and the plan's outline place emphasis on investment in human capital that is key to promoting both well-rounded personal development and all-around advancement of human rights, as people themselves are the fundamental goal of modernization.

On the one hand, more public resources are being directed to sectors related to livelihoods, such as education, employment, healthcare and social security.

On the other hand, the country is aligning investment priorities to ensure that resources are allocated to safeguard and promote people's rights.

The focus is on meeting people's basic subsistence needs, boosting the quality of life, and ensuring people live a life of security, stability and dignity.

By improving the basic public service system and the social security system, the aim is to establish a network to protect subsistence rights that covers all people and ensures their well-being throughout their lives.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Unlocking people's potential is another major goal. Investment in human capital will help enhance people's ability to grow, participate and create. The documents emphasize removing barriers to personal development and call for improving the lifelong learning system, optimizing human resource development, and refining the country's employment support mechanisms so that different groups of people enjoy greater parity of opportunities.

The recommendations and the outline lay a solid institutional foundation for the advancement of human rights. They call for continued improvement in the institutions, standards and procedures for whole-process people's democracy as well as coordinated efforts to promote sound legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice and observance of the law by all.

The documents also aim to facilitate upward mobility of people. They attach importance to creating an environment of fair competition, making rules and policies more fair to ensure equal opportunities, and improving the institutions for coordinated development among different regions and between urban and rural areas.

As China's human rights cause starts a new chapter, the country needs to develop human rights theories based on its own practice and accelerate the building of its own human rights knowledge system.

China's human rights cause has given rise to new concepts such as "living a happy life is the primary human right" and "the rights to subsistence and development are the primary and basic human rights".

There is an imbalance between human rights knowledge provided by the Global North and that provided by the Global South.

Continued efforts are therefore needed to draw inspiration from Chinese modernization, build China's human rights theoretical framework and help address that imbalance.

China also has to build a more vivid narrative, allowing the world to know better about its human rights achievements.

Chinese modernization provides both the material and a solid foundation for the country to tell its human rights story. Since it entered the new era, China has made remarkable achievements in human rights.

Human rights have been promoted through development, protected through reform and improved through governance. These macro-level achievements should be translated into multi-dimensional and relatable stories.

By sharing with the world its human rights stories and insights, China can help make global human rights governance more just, equitable and inclusive.

At present, global human rights development still faces many challenges, including hegemonism, regional conflicts and extreme poverty. China has adhered to inclusive development, pursued the common human aspiration of "human rights for all" and created favorable conditions for developing countries to share in development gains.

Going forward, the country needs to continue strengthening international human rights and building a community with a shared future for humanity.

The author is the executive vice-president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Asit K. Biswas, Wang Hao and Cecilia Tortajada

Flood of opportunities in ecological preservation

The idea of ecological civilization was first introduced during the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007, marking a new direction in the country's social and economic development. In 2012, it became even more central when it was included in the "five-in-one" framework, placing environmental protection alongside economic, political, cultural, and social development.

Global Lens

The importance of the concept has continued to grow. In 2017, ecological civilization was described as a long-term goal for China's future, and, in 2018, it was written into its Constitution.

Today, it is a key concept shaping how the country approaches development.

In recent years, China has made remarkable progress in embedding ecological civilization effectively into its development planning.

A major challenge to the country's continuous socioeconomic development during the post-2020 era has been that the climate, as in the rest of the world, has been changing much faster than scientists had expected. Fortunately, the concept of ecological civilization has provided an important framework within which the issues associated with climate change can be properly addressed.

One of the clearest signs of climate change is the shifting patterns of rainfall.

Since the early 2000s, northern China, traditionally a water-scarce area, has been receiving more rainfall than before, while some areas along the Yangtze River have been recording less rain.

This climate shift is gradually changing China's ecological landscape.

These changes are closely linked to the increase in global warming. Rising temperatures are making extreme weather conditions more frequent and intense, and sometimes for longer durations.

For example, more typhoons are moving faster northward in the country, increasing the risk of heavy rainfall, and thus increasing economic losses in inland regions.

As a result, areas that once faced regular droughts now have to face new challenges such as severe storms and floods.

Against this backdrop, ecological civilization is helping China respond to both new opportunities and unfamiliar challenges. Increased rainfall is easing water shortages in northern and northwestern regions.

Across the Mongolian Plateau, for example, surface water bodies and wetlands have shown clear signs of recovery since 2010. These changes are opening up new environmental and economic possibilities.

In Inner Mongolia autonomous region, this trend can already be observed. East Juyan Lake, which disappeared in the late 20th century, has reappeared in recent years. Wuliangsuhai Lake has begun to stabilize after years of steady decline. Hongjiannao Lake, the largest desert freshwater lake in China, is also gradually recovering, helped not only by increased rainfall but also by the implementation of stronger environmental policies and better water and land management practices.

These environmental improvements are also improving agriculture and local economies. In northeastern provinces like Heilongjiang and Jilin, warmer temperatures and more rainfall are extending growing seasons and supporting the expansion of maize and rice production.

In the North China Plain, more rainfall and effective groundwater management have significantly reduced pressure on aquifer depletion. This process is helping farmers maintain stable production of wheat and maize, which ensures food security and increases rural household incomes.

At the same time, recovering ecosystems are creating new economic opportunities for people. Proper management of wetlands and lakes is supporting fisheries, eco-tourism and several green industries. In this way, ecological improvements are being increasingly linked with socioeconomic development.

In cities, ecological civilization is also changing how climate risks are managed.

Places such as Wuhan, Hubei province and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, among others, have developed "sponge city" programs, which allow rainwater to contribute to groundwater recharge.

This means water can be used instead of causing floods and economic damage.

Major infrastructure projects, including the South-North Water Transfer, are also helping to balance water resources across regions, and contributing to the country's economic development.

Recent extreme weather events have further pushed these efforts forward. Cities have further improved monitoring systems and inter-institutional coordination, making adaptation to climate change more effective, proactive and less damaging.

However, challenges remain. More intense rainfall is putting added pressure on flood control systems and urban drainage networks that were designed for the more stable climate conditions in the past.

Adaptation is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvements.

Ecological civilization offers a clear direction for this effort. It connects environmental protection with economic and social planning, helping China adapt to changing climate conditions while continuing its steady social and economic development.

By improving water and land management practices, supporting agriculture, and strengthening resilience in cities and regions, China is turning climate challenges into opportunities for more sustainable growth.

In other words, ecological civilization is not just an ideological concept but also a practical way forward in a changing climate.

Asit K. Biswas is a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Glasgow in the UK; Wang Hao is an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a professor at the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research; Cecilia Tortajada is an honorary professor at the University of Glasgow in the UK.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Li Juncheng

Young urban ears increasingly tuning into podcasts

A subway ride, a treadmill, a late-night walk home: all these are places where podcasts have quietly taken root. For many young urban people, listening has become part of the daily rhythm.

An episode on the morning commute, another at the gym, one more before bed — this is not a niche habit, but simply how people live now.

The rise of podcasts can be traced back to around 2020. The pandemic changed how people moved through daily life. Commutes shrank, travel stopped, and working from home became routine for many.

Time once used for socializing, commuting, or light entertainment needed a new home. Podcasts stepped into that space with unusual ease. They were easy to access, easy to fit into daily routines, and rich enough to offer both information and company.

The growth has been fast. China is now one of the world's fastest-growing podcast markets. By 2025, the number of Chinese-language podcast listeners was expected to cross 150 million, while the total market revenue may have exceeded 5 billion yuan ($733.5 million). In the competition for attention, podcasts have claimed something rare: uninterrupted time.

That is one reason podcasts feel different from so much of today's content. Short-form video is built for speed and surprise. Podcasts ask for something else. A conversation can stretch across 40 minutes, an hour, or sometimes even longer. There is no rush to the punchline, no need for visual fireworks. The human voice carries the experience. It can sound casual, intimate, thoughtful, even reassuring. That is a big part of the medium's power.

In a world crowded with noise, they offer a different kind of attention. In a world driven by speed, they make room for thought.

Podcasts also fit naturally into moments when the eyes are busy but the mind is free. Walking, running, cooking, driving, folding laundry — these are all times when audio makes sense. A podcast can turn spare minutes into something fuller and make a daily routine feel less empty.

Still, the appeal of podcasts goes beyond convenience. They also answer a quieter emotional need.

A listener who cannot sleep at night may listen to a familiar host talking about a book, a film or simply the events of the day. The effect can be surprisingly comforting. Research suggests that listening to the human voice can prompt the release of oxytocin, often called the "trust hormone", which is linked to reduced stress and a greater sense of closeness. Podcasts make use of that effect in an understated way. Over time, the relationship between host and listener can become almost personal.

The boom has been helped by the range of people making podcasts. In August 2025, public figures such as Luo Yonghao and Chen Luyu entered the field with video podcasts. At the same time, independent creators have continued to bring their own voices, expertise and obsessions into the mix.

The result is a broad soundscape that now includes culture, science, dialects, folklore, philosophy, and new occupations. On Xiaoyuzhou, a major platform, 2025 saw more than 64,000 new podcast shows and nearly 700,000 new episodes.

That is where podcasts start functioning as an alternative publishing world. In the traditional book market, many subjects never find a strong commercial home. They may matter deeply to a small audience, but they are too specialized to justify a print run. Podcasts remove that barrier. With a smartphone, a microphone, and a quiet room, a creator can speak to thousands of people who care about the same narrow subject.

That helps explain why podcasts are becoming culturally important in ways that are easy to overlook. In Lyuliang, Shanxi province, a group of Jin dialect enthusiasts launched a podcast to explore and preserve their local dialect. In Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, several podcasts have moved offline, turning digital conversations into live cultural gatherings.

These examples are small, but they point to something larger. Podcasts can strengthen connections between people and places and turn shared interests into real communities.

Of course, the industry still has real problems. Content quality varies widely, business models are uneven and regulation is still catching up. But new cultural forms often look less important than they later prove to be.

Online literature once seemed like a side current; it later fed a much larger IP economy. Podcasts may follow a similar path. As more high-quality original content moves toward sustainable paid models, the medium could become a stable part of the digital cultural landscape.

The appeal of podcasts lies in depth, sincerity, and voice. They are rooted in ordinary life, shaped by ordinary people, and carried by ordinary moments. That is precisely why they matter.

In a world crowded with noise, they offer a different kind of attention. In a world driven by speed, they make room for thought. And in the space between one voice and another, they are helping shape a new kind of mass culture.

The author is an associate researcher at the Institute of Finance and Banking of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a senior research fellow at the National Institution for Finance and Development.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

ZHANG MING

Pressure point

Volatility in global financial asset prices is expected to remain persistently elevated throughout the year



More than two months have elapsed since the outbreak of the Iran crisis. The trajectory of the situation remains highly uncertain. This prolonged standoff is likely to reinforce global stagflation and exert significant influence on the pricing dynamics of various financial assets.

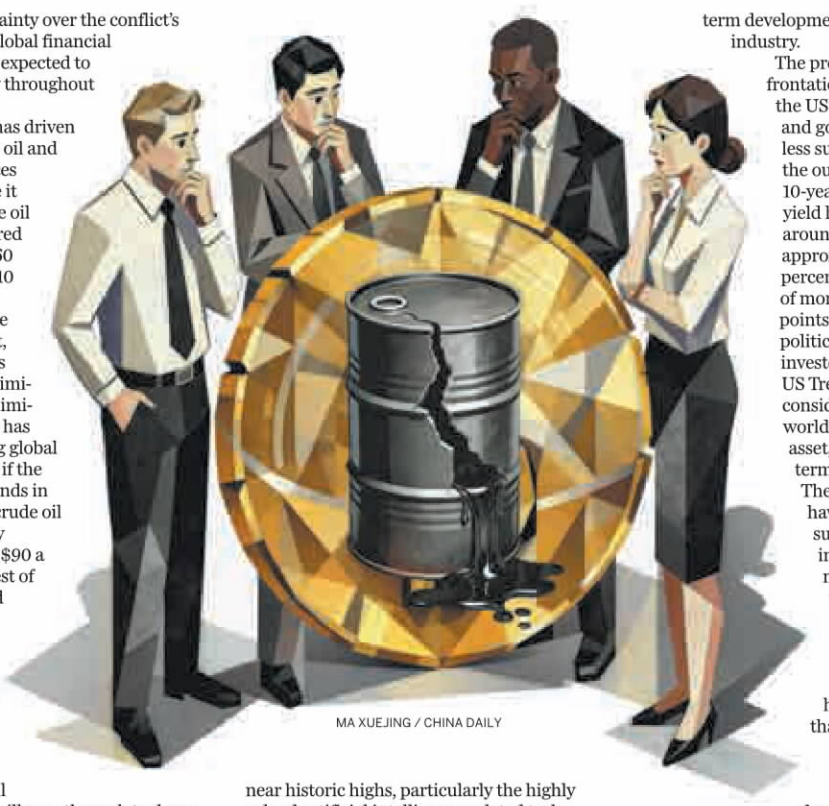
Since 2022, the global growth landscape has shifted from prolonged stagnation to stagflation. The former features "three lows and one high" (low growth, low inflation, low interest rates and high government debt), while the latter features "one low and three highs" (low growth, moderately high inflation, relatively high interest rates and high government debt). The key difference between the two lies in inflation, which in turn determines the divergence in interest rate trends.

The marked rise in global inflation since 2022 stems, on the supply side, from disruptions to global industry and supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis; on the demand side, it reflects the unprecedented macroeconomic policy easing adopted by various countries after the pandemic, which boosted household consumption.

Over the past two to three years, global inflation has moderated to some extent. However, the ongoing Iran crisis and the resultant surge in global commodity prices represent yet another major supply-side shock to the world economy — following the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis. With aggregate demand unchanged, this results in lower economic growth and higher inflation, thereby further entrenching global stagflation. For instance, in its latest World Economic Outlook released in April, the International Monetary Fund revised down its global growth forecast for the year from 3.3 percent to 3.1 percent.

The Iran crisis has already roiled global financial markets since its eruption. Given the high uncertainty over the conflict's future course, global financial asset prices are expected to fluctuate wildly throughout 2026.

The conflict has driven up global crude oil and natural gas prices markedly. Since it broke out, crude oil prices have soared from around $60 to as high as $110 a barrel — an increase of more than 80 percent, with natural gas prices posting similar gains. A preliminary consensus has emerged among global investors: Even if the confrontation ends in the near term, crude oil prices will likely remain around $90 a barrel for the rest of the year. Should the confrontation persist, prices may break through the $110 to $120 range. More importantly, higher oil and gas prices will pass through to downstream goods, including electricity, chemicals, fertilizers and food. Rising pesticide and food prices would place noticeable pressure on emerging markets and developing economies, potentially triggering humanitarian crises.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The confrontation has sharply increased volatility in global equity markets, and the overvalued US stock market could tip into a bear market. Since the outbreak, major global equity indices have all corrected to varying degrees. The US market remains near historic highs, particularly the highly valued artificial intelligence-related tech stocks. Even before the confrontation, some analysts had argued that US stocks faced considerable downward pressure this year. The outbreak has amplified the likelihood of a sharp correction for three reasons. First, the conflict will push up US inflation, interrupting the Federal Reserve's rate-cut cycle and possibly even forcing a return to rate hikes; second, it has dampened risk appetite and heightened risk aversion among global investors; third, it could drive up electricity prices, constraining the near-term development of the AI industry.

The prolonged confrontation could make the US' fiscal deficits and government debt less sustainable. Since the outbreak, the 10-year US Treasury yield has risen from around 4 percent to approximately 4.3 percent — an increase of more than 30 basis points. Normally, geopolitical conflicts lead investors to buy more US Treasuries, widely considered the world's premier safe asset, pushing long-term yields down. The fact that yields have risen instead suggests that investors are now questioning the safe-haven status of these instruments and are less motivated to hold them. If that safe-haven status continues to erode, and if domestic US inflation rises significantly, the possibility that 10-year yields will remain persistently high cannot be ruled out. Given that US federal debt has already exceeded 120 percent of nominal GDP, persistently high long-term yields imply a sharp increase in future debt service burdens. Moreover, the confrontation itself will substantially widen the current US fiscal deficit. Taken together, the US-Israel-Iran conflict is likely to aggravate the unsustainability of the US' fiscal deficits and government debt.

As the confrontation grinds on, gold prices are likely to reverse their recent decline and move higher. Gold had fallen from around $5,400 to $4,400 per ounce, before recovering to roughly $4,700. The initial price drop — despite heightened geopolitical tensions — mainly reflects the enormous run-up in gold prices over 2024 and 2025, which had already priced in much of the future uncertainty. In addition, gold exchange-traded funds, which are increasingly behaving like speculative investments rather than long-term investments, have grown in scale and influence. Nevertheless, if the confrontation drags on longer than markets expect, and if US Treasuries are no longer seen as a trustworthy safe asset, gold's unique status as a store of value could drive its price back up — although even in an upward trend, volatility will remain high.

For major economies of the Global South — particularly energy importers — the Iran crisis could lead to higher import costs, slower growth, rising inflation and greater asset price volatility. These countries should consider the following countermeasures: First, if domestic energy prices rise too rapidly, authorities could release strategic petroleum reserves or impose temporary price controls to cushion the impact; second, strengthen monitoring of short-term cross-border capital flows and take steps to prevent excessive outflows; third, prepare policy contingency plans to boost domestic growth based on national circumstances and comparative advantages, so as to cope with the uncertainty stemming from the evolving confrontation.

The author is the deputy director at the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a researcher at the National Institute for Global Strategy at the CASS. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHEN WENXIN

New discourse to uphold multilateralism

While the US' withdrawals from multilateral organizations upset world cooperation, China will continue to contribute to global governance through initiatives



The United States announced on Jan 7 its withdrawals from 66 international organizations that "no longer serve American interests", 31 of them being the United Nations bodies. Although the US' withdrawals from multilateral institutions are nothing new, the scale of this move is unprecedented and carries far-reaching implications for global governance and the international order.

The withdrawals reflect deliberate strategic planning. The 66 organizations were identified through a comprehensive review mandated by President Donald Trump's Executive Order 14199. Each decision was shaped by a mix of strategic calculation and political considerations to serve the "America First" agenda.

Moreover, unlike earlier withdrawals that were confined to a single domain, the organizations that have been hit this time cut across a wide range of core areas of global governance, such as climate change, human rights and cultural cooperation. Therefore, the withdrawals this time will have far-reaching and complex implications for the multilateral system.

By withdrawing from international organizations, the US is not abandoning global governance, but seeking to redefine its role within it.

One objective is to concentrate power in a handful of priority domains. Consistent with its national security strategy, the Trump administration seeks selective engagement in global governance to sharply reduce investment in non-strategic areas while preserving dominance in the global economy, advanced technology and military security.

Another aim is to minimize constraints and advance unilateral hegemony. By systematically dismantling the existing global system and exerting pressure in international interactions, Washington seeks fewer institutional checks and greater freedom of action to force through its agenda unilaterally.

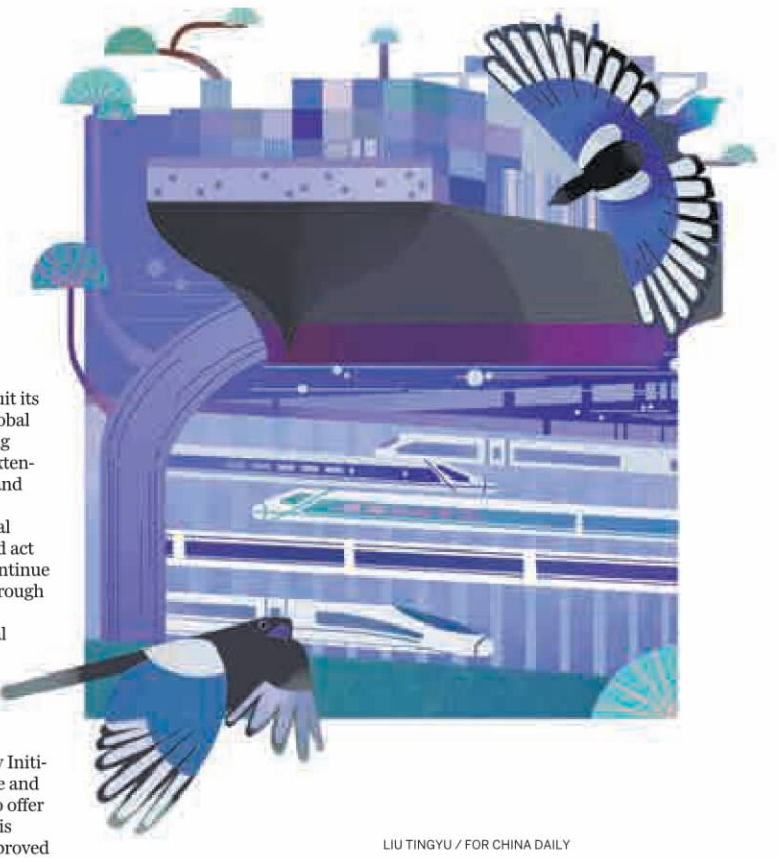
A third goal is to scale back investment in global governance. The US increasingly evaluates global engagement through a cost-benefit lens and reshapes its global role accordingly. Continued cuts to funding for international organizations are intended to reduce external burdens, reflecting a utilitarian approach.

Following the sweeping US withdrawals, the global governance system and the international order will face more challenges.

The foundations of the global governance structure have been eroded. The US' exit from UN-related bodies and mechanisms such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has disrupted the existing global system and weakened the authority and effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms, pushing the UN-centered governance structure into a crisis of trust.

The withdrawals have also weakened global coordination and deepened fragmentation in global governance. Cooperation in climate action, public health and security has been disrupted, leading to the under-provision of global public goods, stalled regional collaboration and rising difficulties in policy alignment. As a result, global governance will become ever more divided.

The US' withdrawals from multilateral organizations as a tool for power politics and selective application of rules to suit its interests have deepened divisions. Global cooperation also faces the risk of being steered away from the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.



LIU TINGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

In response to this, the international community must build consensus and act collectively. China, for its part, will continue to contribute to global governance through global initiatives.

First, the central role of multilateral institutions can be strengthened. By upholding the UN as the core platform of global governance, China has put forward four global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative — to offer Chinese solutions to the world. On this basis, China can further advocate improved decision-making and financial mechanisms to ensure continuity on critical agendas. Reforming these institutions will allow China to deepen cooperation with other Global South countries, amplify the voice of developing nations and help address long-standing imbalances in Western-dominated governance. China can also use multilateral platforms to promote the enforcement of international law, establish multilateral mechanisms to ensure compliance and bolster resilience against unilateralism.

Second, more diversified and coordinated cooperation networks can be built. Linkages can be deepened among regional mechanisms such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, creating synergies through policy coordination, resource sharing and mutual recognition of outcomes. Furthermore, China will continue to leverage the Belt and Road Initiative to align national development strategies with regional cooperation plans. At the same time, emerging economies and developing states can be encouraged to develop new forms of multilateral cooperation to strengthen cross-regional resilience.

Third, a global consensus for collective action should be reached. Global issues can be prioritized to foster broad-based cooperation. In climate governance, China will continue to uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to advance more inclusive implementation pathways. In public healthcare and food security, it is essential to build global platforms to facilitate technology exchanges, joint responses to emergencies and coordination on raw resources. Moreover, China can also work to promote a new discourse on global governance, to ensure equity, justice and shared responsibility are embedded in rule-making. This is key to upholding multilateralism, building consensus to address global challenges and injecting certainty into global governance.

The author is the director of the Institute of American Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

Rules eased to boost cross-border financing

PBOC, SAFE hike lending leverage ratios to support corporate overseas expansion

By **JIANG XUEQING**
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

China has stepped up policy support for cross-border financing by raising leverage ratios for overseas lending by foreign banks in the country and the Export-Import Bank of China, in a move aimed at boosting the real economy, facilitating trade and investment, and accelerating the global use of the renminbi.

The adjustment comes as banks' overseas lending has expanded steadily in recent years, with the share of renminbi-denominated loans continuing to rise, even as some banks have seen their outstanding overseas loans approach existing regulatory caps.

Under the new regulations, the overseas lending leverage ratio for wholly foreign-owned banks, Sino-foreign joint venture banks and branches of foreign banks in China has been raised from 0.5 to 1.5, while that of the Export-Import Bank of China, also known as China Eximbank, has increased from 3 to 3.5.

In a recently issued joint notice, the People's Bank of China, the central bank, and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange also said that domestic banks extending loans with maturity exceeding one year in renminbi and foreign currencies to overseas enterprises indirectly — such as through overseas banks — can now have those loans processed in accordance with regulations of their respective jurisdictions, simplifying procedures and improving cross-border financing efficiency.

Western Securities estimated that the adjustment will increase the aggregate overseas lending ceiling of 41 locally incorporated foreign banks in China, including wholly foreign-owned and JV banks, by 497.5 billion yuan ($73.13 billion), and raise China Eximbank's overseas lending ceiling by 194.8 billion yuan. Together with expanded quotas for domestic branches of foreign banks, the total increase in overseas lending capacity is expected to reach between 700 billion and 800 billion yuan.

Zhou Antong, an analyst at Western Securities, said in a research report that China Eximbank will benefit the most from the policy change, with its share of overseas lending assets expected to rise further. The second tier of beneficiaries include large foreign banks operating in China. In addition to higher overseas lending quotas, the simplified procedures for indirect lending will also benefit their global networks by strengthening cross-border coordination and boosting income from international business.

The report said that the policy adjustment aligns with the goals of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). It will provide financial support for the global expansion of China's "new three" industries, namely electric vehicles, solar panels and lithium-ion batteries, and other competitive sectors, while meeting the capital-intensive needs of high-end manufacturing going abroad.

Moreover, companies engaging in on-lending through overseas banks or participating in international syndicated loans can now proceed directly in accordance with local regulations, significantly reducing cross-border compliance costs.

Analysts said Chinese banks still have considerable room to expand their global footprint, making the role of China Eximbank especially important in areas such as overseas trade financing and cross-border guarantees. At the same time, as the internationalization of the renminbi accelerates and China's exports have grown rapidly in recent years, foreign banks are playing an increasingly vital role in cross-border payment services. Against this backdrop, expanding the business scale of foreign banks and strengthening their role as key partners in foreign trade has become an urgent priority.

Wesley Yang, deputy CEO of Standard Chartered China, said: "Raising the overseas lending leverage ratio for foreign-funded banks in China to 1.5 provides concrete and effective policy support for their further development."

Yang said that as Chinese companies expand overseas at a faster pace, demand for cross-border financial services, particularly cross-border loans, has risen significantly.

"The new policy will not only allow foreign banks to further leverage their strengths and deepen involvement in cross-border lending, but also effectively expand key channels for renminbi funds to go global, supporting the currency's broader use in international credit and investment," Yang said.

Standard Chartered will seize the opportunity presented by this new policy to continue leveraging its global network and extensive experience in cross-border financial services. The bank is dedicated to providing efficient financial support to both Chinese and foreign enterprises — particularly Chinese companies expanding overseas — including comprehensive cross-border RMB solutions, to help them navigate their global expansion with confidence and achieve long-term success, he added.

Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance, said the policy adjustment will further ease overseas financing difficulties for companies "going global", while encouraging greater use of the renminbi by overseas entities and advancing the currency's internationalization.

Zeng Gang, chief expert and director of the Shanghai Institution for Finance and Development, said the move will significantly enhance financial institutions' ability to serve the real economy.

On the one hand, raising the leverage ratios will substantially expand banks' lending capacity, addressing constraints such as limited overseas financing quotas and high funding costs. This will enable greater support for cross-border industrial chains, overseas infrastructure and livelihood-related projects, helping overseas entities maintain stable operations. On the other hand, simplifying indirect lending procedures encourages banks to conduct business in a compliant and more autonomous manner, improving the convenience of cross-border investment and financing, Zeng said.

The measures will also help balance cross-border capital flows and promote deeper integration of Chinese financial institutions into the global financial system, he added.



Rail drill

Staff members monitor real-time data during an emergency drill for nonstandard train receptions and departures at Taiyuan North Station in Shanxi province, under China Railway Taiyuan Group, on Wednesday. As a core node on China's major coal transportation corridor, the station handles the marshalling of freight trains on multiple trunk lines, including Shijiazhuang-Taiyuan Railway and Datong-Taiyuan Railway, with a total coal transport volume of 9.75 million metric tons in 2025.
LIU YUXUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



A face-changing performance draws visitors at Konggang flower field in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Sunday. LI XIANGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Immersive, emotion-driven experiences redefine May Day holiday tourism mkt

By **LI JING**
lijing2009@chinadaily.com.cn

When visitors arrived at the ancient city wall of Nanjing in Jiangsu province during the May Day holiday, many expected a typical historical tour. Instead, they were greeted by actors portraying Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) figures strolling along the ramparts, inviting tourists into improvised scenes, posing for photos and weaving vivid stories about the site's centuries-old past.

"I originally came just to see the city wall relics," said Wu Jiaying, a tourist from Zhejiang province. "But the interactive performance made history come alive."

Across China during the just-concluded five-day holiday, such immersive encounters became increasingly common, reflecting a broader shift in the country's tourism market. Travelers — particularly younger ones — are moving away from traditional "checklist" sightseeing toward experiences that offer atmosphere, storytelling and emotional engagement.

"Tourism today is less about visiting the most famous sites and more about whether the experience creates emotional resonance," said Wu Liyun, a professor at the China Academy of Culture and Tourism at Beijing International Studies University.

"What travelers seek is emotional value — the feeling of being relaxed, understood and connected with a place."

Cities across China experimented with new tourism formats during the holiday, combining cultural heritage with interactive storytelling.

In Chengdu, Sichuan province, themed "city walk" routes linked more than 500 cultural and lifestyle venues, from historic streets and parks to music venues and food markets. Historical characters appeared along popular walking routes, interacting with visitors through improvised performances and poetry recitals.

Meanwhile, in Anshun, Guizhou province, the 600-year-old Yunfeng Tunpu — often described as a "living relic" of Ming Dynasty military settlements — reimagined traditional sightseeing by turning the entire village into a live-action role-playing game. Rather than passively listening to tour guides, visitors adopted character identities to solve a historical mystery, hunting for clues and interacting with NPCs inside ancient military tents and batik workshops.

> "Tourism today is less about visiting the most famous sites and more about whether the experience creates emotional resonance."
>
> **Wu Liyun,** a professor at the China Academy of Culture and Tourism at Beijing International Studies University

For local businesses, such interactive formats help extend visitor stays and encourage spending on accommodation, dining and entertainment rather than relying solely on ticket revenue.

Travel platform data suggest that younger travelers are driving the shift, prioritizing personal interests over generic itineraries.

According to a report jointly released by online travel platform Fliggy and lifestyle app Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, around 69 percent of surveyed users chose their holiday destinations primarily based on personal interests rather than traditional sightseeing priorities.

Concerts, sporting events and festivals have also become major tourism drivers. Online platform Tongcheng Travel said city soccer tournaments boosted visitor flows to destinations including Nanjing and Suzhou in Jiangsu province, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

Also an online travel services provider, Qunar said hotel bookings near Zhengzhou Olympic Sports Center in Henan province rose 214 percent year-on-year during the May Day holiday as concerts attracted visitors from across the country.

Analysts say these diverse interests are reshaping travel flows, drawing visitors well beyond traditional tourism hot spots.

Reflecting this structural change in tourism consumption, Wu said: "In the past, tourism relied largely on natural or historical resources and ticket sales. Today, destinations must combine those resources with creative products and local lifestyles to build deeper, more memorable experiences."

Local neighborhood culture, markets and interactive performances are increasingly becoming tourism attractions themselves, she added.

Economists say the phenomenon highlights the rise of the "emotion economy".

"The object of consumption is shifting from the utility of goods to the symbolic and experiential value they carry," said Tian Lihui, a professor of finance at Nankai University.

According to consultancy iiMedia Research, China's emotion-driven consumption market reached 2.72 trillion yuan ($377 billion) in 2025 and is projected to exceed 4.5 trillion yuan by 2029.

The trend is also providing fresh momentum for domestic consumption and economic growth.

In January, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a work plan to guide efforts in optimizing and expanding the supply of services, including experience-based and emotion-driven services.

This model allows businesses to move beyond price competition toward higher-value offerings, Tian said.

"Businesses are no longer just selling products — they are curating experiences," he said. "A cafe sells a moment of quiet, a hotel sells rest and a tourism destination becomes the stage for emotional storytelling."

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism said local governments organized around 13,700 cultural and tourism events nationwide during the holiday while issuing more than 280 million yuan in consumer subsidies and vouchers.

As competition between destinations intensifies, the shift toward immersive and lifestyle-oriented tourism is likely to accelerate.

"What attracts visitors now is not only landmarks," Wu said. "It is the opportunity to experience a city's culture, lifestyle and emotional atmosphere."

Coca-Cola posts robust Q1 results driven by biz in China

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

The Coca-Cola Company reported first-quarter results that exceeded market expectations, with revenue and profit rising on steady global demand and stronger momentum in emerging markets, including China.

Net revenue climbed 12 percent to $12.47 billion, beating analysts' estimates of $12.23 billion. Organic revenue grew 10 percent, while net income increased 19 percent to $3.97 billion.

Global unit case volume expanded 3 percent in the quarter, driven by growth in China, the United States and India. The Asia-Pacific region posted a 5 percent increase in volume, underscoring its role as a key growth engine for the beverage giant.

By category, sparkling soft drinks grew 2 percent globally. Coca-Cola grew 2 percent, driven by growth in the Asia-Pacific and North America. Coca-Cola Zero Sugar grew 13 percent. Sparkling flavors grew 3 percent, while water, sports drinks, coffee and tea grew 5 percent.

CEO Henrique Braun said during the results announcement that the Asia-Pacific is one region that the company is definitely developing for the future.

Braun said volume growth was recorded across all operating units in the region, alongside gains in market share. In China, he said the company's focus on categories with a competitive advantage is beginning to deliver results.

"We're not going to play in every category," Braun said. "We are focusing on quality, scale and segments where we believe we have the right to win — and that is now starting to pay back."

Coca-Cola China continues to lead on sparkling in the domestic market, said the company.

The company has expanded its product portfolio to capture evolving consumer preferences. New offerings in the quarter included Coca-Cola's new prebiotic soda, Sprite + Tea, and functional beverages such as Minute Maid Vitamin C Citrus, targeting consumption scenarios ranging from meals to sports.

The company has stepped up efforts to connect with consumers through culturally tailored marketing and product innovation. During the Chinese New Year holiday, the beverage giant launched an AI-enabled campaign inspired by traditional Chinese art, allowing consumers to create personalized digital portraits via connected packaging.

The company also introduced a limited-edition "Year of the Horse" fireworks can packaging, incorporating zodiac imagery and embroidery-inspired design elements.

To better serve the local market, Coca-Cola China continues to collaborate with its bottling partners and accelerate supply chain expansion. Over the past three years, the Coca-Cola China system has invested in upgrading five production facilities, encompassing facility construction, capacity expansion and smart upgrades, supporting sustainable business growth.



A visitor takes a bottle of Coca-Cola from a robotic arm during a high-tech expo in Shanghai on March 28. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In April, Coca-Cola's Jinwan New Plant in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, was officially inaugurated. As a key production and sales base in southern China, the facility represents a total investment of about 835 million yuan ($122.75 million), with 15 planned production lines.

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BUSINESS

Durian boom ripening into supply chain story

Cold chain, efficient cross-border e-commerce make China global trade hub for tropical fruit



Left: A staff member weighs durians at a fruit distributor's operating center in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province, on Oct 17. DENG HUA / XINHUA
Below left: A consumer selects fresh durians at an imported durian distribution center in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on April 26. ZHANG LANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE
Below right: An employee sells durians via livestreaming at an imported durian distribution center in Chengdu on April 26. ZHANG LANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE





> "The industry is still expanding rapidly, but already entering a period of structural differentiation."
>
> **Liu Junhong,**
> a businessman from Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region

BEIJING — When durian season arrives, it makes a grand entrance to China via railway wagon, cold-chain container and express vessel, bringing with it a fruit whose distinctive aroma may divide opinion, but whose commercial appeal is unmistakable.

In the space of about 24 hours from the morning of April 25, three "durian express" vessels carrying 356 containers and more than 6,300 metric tons of fresh Thai durians arrived at Nansha Port in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province. The fruit was to be distributed across China in time to add to supplies for the May Day holiday. Since April 15, Nansha Customs has supervised the import of more than 9,500 tons of fresh durians.

The railway picture is just as telling. From Jan 1 to April 26, the China-Laos Railway transported 50,300 tons of imported durians, up 94.2 percent year-on-year, according to China Railway Kunming Group. The figures show not only that Chinese consumers are buying more durians, but also that the supply routes serving this growing demand are becoming faster and more efficient.

Durians have long occupied an unusual place in China's fruit market. For devoted buyers, it is the "king of fruits", rich, creamy and worth paying for. For others, its unique smell remains a barrier.

Yet that traditional divide is narrowing as durians move beyond boutique supermarkets and first-tier urban consumers. Better cold-chain logistics, more efficient cross-border supply chains and the spread of e-commerce have brought durians into community group-buying channels, lower-tier cities and county-level markets.

That expansion has made China the center of gravity for the global durian trade. Customs data show that China imported about 1.87 million tons of fresh durians in 2025, making it the world's most important consumer market for the fruit. Industry participants say the consumer base has grown rapidly. Rising incomes, larger supply and improved cold-chain infrastructure have all helped enlarge the market.

For ports and railways, the challenge is speed, as fresh fruit is an unforgiving cargo. At Mohan railway port, the core hub for China-Laos Railway international freight, the authorities have deepened coordination with Laos' Boten port, streamlined customs procedures and worked to keep cross-border logistics flowing.

Railway departments, customs and companies have formed special teams for the transport of fresh fruit. Green channels for inspection give priority to entry, inspection and testing, linking arrival, clearance and transfer more smoothly and sharply reducing the time fruit spends at the port.

Nansha, China's largest seaborne port for durian imports, is making a similar effort. As Southeast Asia's main producing areas enter peak season, its durian imports are expected to keep rising between April and June.

Yet scale has not reduced scrutiny. For the concentrated arrivals in late April, customs officers carried out targeted inspection and quarantine, checking for harmful organisms and taking samples for pesticide residues, heavy metals and other safety indicators.

"Visible pest risks can be checked by the eye, but invisible microbes and contaminants must also be strictly guarded against," said Lin Xiaojing, an official with Nansha Customs.

As a result, the market is expanding not only in size, but also in standards. Niti Pratoomvongsa, commercial counselor at the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Nanning, capital of South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, said Chinese consumers are shifting from a focus on price toward a stronger concern for quality, food safety, production standards and traceability. This change is raising the bar for competition.

Southeast Asian suppliers are responding. As planting areas expand in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia, industry participants say the competition among Southeast Asian suppliers in China is still being reshaped.

Chinese capital and business operators are also moving further upstream. Liu Junhong, a Guangxi businessman who shifted from engineering and agricultural irrigation into durians five years ago, has inspected markets in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam and invested in a planting project in Cambodia's Kampot province.

"The industry is still expanding rapidly, but already entering a period of structural differentiation," Liu said. His answer is to focus on higher-end varieties such as "Black Thorn" to avoid future homogenized competition.

Growth, however, does not guarantee easy profits for everyone. Wang Zhengbo, chairman of Guangxi TWT Supply Chain Management, a trading company specializing in Thai durians, noted that the durian chain is long and layered, from planting to retail, with costs accumulating at each stage. Large traders and those controlling upstream resources are relatively stable, while some smaller players are more exposed to price volatility.

At the production end, Nicholas Lui, a durian grower from Malaysia's Pahang state, said rising fertilizer, fuel and labor costs — together with stricter procurement standards, are narrowing margins.

Even so, the direction of travel remains clear. China's market is widely seen by industry participants as far from saturated, but it is becoming more selective. Poor quality fruit, uneven standards and inefficient supply chains will find it harder to survive.

The boom is also creating new forms of consumption. In Nansha, a port-side fresh market model allows fruit to be unloaded, containers opened and products sold directly. A durian carnival on April 30 offered Thai Monthong, Malaysian Musang King and other varieties to consumers. In producing countries, some businesses are exploring durian tourism, combining picking experiences with agricultural travel. Processed products, from frozen pulp to cakes and snacks, are also extending the value chain.

The fruit's flavor may not have changed. But from orchard to port, railway and dinner table, the business around it is becoming faster, stricter and more regional. For China and Southeast Asia, the durian season is no longer just a seasonal rush. It is a vivid example of how consumer demand can reshape the routes, standards and economics of a whole supply chain.

XINHUA

Nation's innovative bamboo goods going global



A view of furniture and office supplies made from bamboo at a homestay in Anji county of Huzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, on Aug 16, 2023. ZHU HAN / XINHUA

KUNMING — Under the spring sunshine, vast stems of bamboo are shooting up in the mountains of Southwest China's Yunnan province. Hundreds of kilometers away, a batch of exquisitely packaged bamboo chairs passed customs inspection at the China-Vietnam border, bound for customers in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Since the first order in February this year, bamboo products from Yunnan's Daguan county, including chairs and canes, have been in high demand in Vietnam, with orders continuing to grow.

"We believe high-quality bamboo products can cross borders and let overseas friends feel the charm of Chinese bamboo culture," said Ou Xianqin, chairperson of a local bamboo culture technology company, adding that their bamboo products are exported to Australia, Japan, the United States, Singapore and other countries, with export value reaching about 2 million yuan ($294,000) over the past three years.

Daguan county, with its favorable climate and geography, is a core bamboo production area. By 2025, the county's bamboo planting area had reached 68,000 hectares, with total bamboo industry output exceeding 3.1 billion yuan.

China has the world's richest bamboo resources and is the most developed in its utilization, earning it the title "Kingdom of Bamboo". Figures from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration show the country has nearly 8 million hectares of bamboo forests, producing 150 million metric tons of bamboo each year. The bamboo industry generates over 520 billion yuan annually, with more than 15,000 types of bamboo products available.

As China seeks to replace wood and plastic products with bamboo alternatives to reduce pollution and carbon emissions, Chinese bamboo enterprises are accelerating their global expansion, tapping overseas markets and contributing to sustainable development worldwide.

Known as the "hometown of bamboo", Anji county in East China's Zhejiang province has about 66,700 hectares of bamboo forests and nearly 1,000 bamboo enterprises. In 2025, the county's bamboo industry output exceeded 20 billion yuan.

At Zhejiang Fenghui Bamboo and Wood Co Ltd in the county, a dazzling variety of bamboo tableware, packaging and lighting fixtures are displayed.

General Manager Liang Fenghui, who took over the business from his father, said the company turns bamboo trunks, branches and even scraps into daily necessities that replace plastic, offering more than 3,000 kinds of related products.

Several years ago, Liang's company developed a series of tableware from discarded bamboo shoot shells. The products later became a hit online, with the bamboo shoot shell lunchboxes alone generating over $500,000 in overseas sales last year.

The company exports 70 percent of its products to markets such as the US, Japan and European countries, achieving 185 million yuan in sales in 2025.

"Don't underestimate these daily necessities that replace plastic — they represent a huge market," said Liang.

According to China Green Times, a forestry industry newspaper, bamboo straws alone have an annual production capacity exceeding 1.2 billion units in the country. Bamboo tableware and lunchboxes are exported to nearly 110 countries and regions, including Japan, South Korea and the US.

"When I took over from my father, we mostly waited for orders, satisfied with 10 percent annual growth," Liang said. "But now, it's time to expand outward."

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CHINA

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Jilin's hubs to modernize production

Industries centered on advanced manufacturing seen as growth drivers

By **LIU MINGTAI** in Changchun and **ZHOU HUIYING**

Northeast China's Jilin province will accelerate the development of a modern industrial system centered on advanced manufacturing, highlighting the province's distinctive advantages, Governor Hu Yuting said on Thursday.

"Jilin is a major agricultural and industrial province, as well as a hub for science, education and culture," Hu said at a news conference on Jilin's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). "Moreover, Jilin has significant comparative advantages in fields such as optoelectronic information, satellite manufacturing, new materials and healthcare."

The province is home to national-level research institutions and teams such as Jilin University and the Changchun Institute of Optics, Fine Mechanics and Physics.

"These institutions have advantages in fields like intelligent cerebellum, dexterous hands and polyetheretherketone, or PEEK, materials, with outstanding capabilities in high-end precision manufacturing," Hu said.

In the aerospace information sector, the Changguang Satellite Technology, based in Changchun, has led the industry in satellite manufacturing technology, offering low-cost, mass-production capabilities.

"The company has launched 152 Jilin-1 family satellites, making it the world's largest sub-meter-level commercial remote-sensing satellite constellation," Hu said.

"We will focus on promoting the integration of communication, navigation and remote sensing, harnessing vast amounts of data to drive the development of the digital economy and satellite internet," he added.

In 2025, Changguang developed and launched 24 satellites and sold 18, generating more than 1 billion yuan ($147 million) in revenue.

Its rapid development of aerospace data services has spurred the coordinated development of more than 1,000 upstream and downstream enterprises.

"After more than 20 years of dedicated effort, Changguang has achieved a qualitative leap," said Jia Hongguang, the company's deputy general manager. "As China's first full-industry-chain commercial remote-sensing satellite enterprise, we have established a complete commercial aerospace industry layout."

In the high-end optoelectronic chip sector, Gpixel Changchun Microelectronics Inc, a global leader in high-performance complementary metal-oxide semiconductor, or CMOS, image sensors, was officially listed on the main board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on April 17, marking a critical milestone in the high-quality development of Changchun's optoelectronic industry.

Since its establishment in 2012, the company has launched more than 40 high-performance CMOS image sensor models across nine series, with chip production exceeding 600,000 units and sales surpassing 800 million yuan.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, the province will promote the transformation of the automotive industry toward intelligent connected new energy vehicles, with a strong emphasis on hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

Efforts will also be made to accelerate the transition to all-solid-state battery vehicles.

"FAW Group's all-solid-state battery vehicles have already been launched, effectively addressing the issue of reduced battery discharge efficiency in low-temperature conditions," Hu said.

Jilin will also promote the petrochemical industry's transition toward fine chemical new materials. "Ethylene, a key raw material for fine chemicals, for instance, is produced at a newly built 1.9 million-metric-ton ethylene project, with more than 40 supporting projects under construction," Hu said. "The next step is to extend the industrial chain, increase added value and create new advantages."

"The key to building a modern industrial system lies in developing new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions," he said. "We will focus on promoting the deep integration of technological innovation and industrial innovation, streamlining the path from technology to sample to commodity to industry, and reinforcing the role of enterprises as the mainstay of technological innovation."

Located at the world's golden latitude for ice and snow, Jilin boasts rare resources such as powder snow, calm winds, warm sunshine and hot springs.

During the past snow season, Jilin saw strong momentum in its ice and snow economy, with the number of detachable ropeways and ski visitors ranking first in the country.

Jin Yuhui, a member of the Jilin Provincial Government Party Leadership Group, said: "Next, we will continue to amplify the effects of the ice and snow economy and use the hosting of the 33rd Winter Universiade, which will be held in January 2027, as an opportunity to comprehensively shape and enhance new advantages in the ice and snow industry."

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn



Spring pastures

Sheep graze on a spring pasture in Altay, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Wednesday. As a cornerstone of Altay's rural vitalization strategy, the annual "transhumance" — the movement of livestock between seasonal grazing grounds — involves over one million animals. Currently, the livestock have completed the trek to spring pastures, before moving to mountain pastures in June.
ARDAK BEYISKAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guangzhou targets medical tourism

By **ZHENG CAIXIONG** in Guangzhou
zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, is sparing no effort to build a globally competitive destination for international medical tourism, with the launch of the Guangzhou International Medical Tourism Service Center recently.

The center will collaborate with the city's 17 pilot hospitals to offer international medical services for foreign patients, including authoritative diagnosis and treatment.

Leveraging the cultural, commercial and tourism resources of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, it will also engage in international brand marketing, medical agency services, travel arrangements, as well as wellness and healthcare, promoting the synergy and integration of medical, tourism and urban service resources.

Lai Zhihong, vice-mayor of Guangzhou, said international medical tourism has recently become an important growth driver in the global health industry.

Relying on its high-quality medical resources, unique Lingnan culture, open environment and advantages as a transportation hub, demand for medical treatment and healthcare in Guangzhou has continued to grow in recent years, Lai said at the launch ceremony of the center.

He urged medical personnel across the city to treat foreign patients with excellent medical services, exquisite expertise and noble medical ethics to help build the city into an international consumption hub with high-quality and distinctive medical services.

Official data shows that inbound passenger visits by foreigners to Guangzhou in 2025 exceeded 3.2 million, with foreign residents' demand for medical services growing rapidly.

Chen Bin, director of the Guangzhou Municipal Health Commission, said Guangzhou has introduced 12 innovative measures to support the development of international medical services. "The new innovative measures will focus on key areas such as building an international medical service brand, optimizing industrial spatial layout, constructing an international medical center, and fostering strengths in specialized medical disciplines and technologies," Chen said.

The innovative measures facilitate multisite practice in Guangzhou for foreign doctors and nurses as well as those from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, while supporting pilot medical institutions in setting up specially appointed positions to recruit high-end international medical talent and attract high-level professionals through multiple channels.

Chen said medical institutions and hospitals are urged to further promote traditional Chinese medicine and build high-level acupuncture diagnosis and treatment centers to strengthen international services, offering foreign patients featured TCM medical services.

According to Wang Zilian, vice-president of the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University, the measures provide a strong guarantee for the delivery of efficient and high-quality international medical services.

"Based on their existing international medical centers, hospitals will continue to improve their independent diagnosis and treatment environments and multilingual service systems, enhance multidisciplinary diagnosis and treatment capabilities, and further provide high-quality medical services to patients from Hong Kong, Macao, Southeast Asia, and countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative," Wang said.

Wu Chen, general manager of the Guangzhou International Medical Tourism Service Center, said the center not only serves medical tourism functions but also focuses on integrating Guangzhou's high-quality medical resources, distinctive cultural tourism assets and cross-border commercial insurance to support the city's development into an international consumption hub and cultivate new drivers of health consumption.

"The center will focus on strengthening comprehensive service capabilities, promoting integrated industrial development, and expanding global cooperation networks to create a product system that deeply integrates medical care, wellness and tourism in the following months," she said.

Meanwhile, the center will also collaborate with major local hospitals to provide overseas patients with one-stop international medical services covering visa assistance, remote pre-consultation, multilingual translation, travel and accommodation arrangements, as well as postoperative follow-up, Wu added.



Dance across cultures

Performers of a song and dance ensemble from Kazakhstan entertain spectators during a flash mob event for the 36th Macao Arts Festival in the Three Lamps district of the Macao Special Administrative Region on Thursday. The festival is organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao.
CHEONG KAM KA / XINHUA

Briefly

Central environmental inspections launched

Teams involved in China's high-profile central environmental inspection campaign will conduct monthlong inspections in seven provincial-level regions, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in a news release on Thursday. Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang and Guangdong provinces, the Guangxi Zhuang, Xizang and Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regions, as well as the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, will be covered in the sixth batch of the third round of inspections, it said. The inspections were launched following approval by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, in accordance with regulations on central ecological and environmental protection inspections. Inspection teams are typically led by ministerial-level officials and report to a central leading group headed by a vice-premier of the State Council, the country's Cabinet.

Ex-senior adviser sentenced for bribery

Zhou Xi'an, a former senior political adviser in Anhui province, was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve for taking bribes worth about 134 million yuan ($19.6 million), a court in Fujian province said on Thursday. The Zhangzhou Intermediate People's Court also imposed a lifelong deprivation of political rights and confiscation of all personal assets against Zhou, who previously served as vice-chairman of the Anhui Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The court ordered that Zhou's illegal gains and related proceeds already seized be turned over to the State treasury, while the remainder will continue to be recovered. According to the ruling, between 2012 and 2025, Zhou used his previous positions, including mayor of Bazhong in Sichuan province, Party chief of Ziyang in Sichuan, and vice-governor of Anhui, as well as the influence derived from his authority and status, to help certain organizations and individuals in matters such as project contracting, fund allocation and land-use approvals. In return, he illegally accepted money and valuables totaling more than 134 million yuan.

CHINA DAILY

Ocean warming threatens penguins in Antarctica

By **ZHENG CAIXIONG** in Guangzhou
zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Climate change and shifts in the food web are continuing to threaten the survival and reproduction of penguins in Antarctica, a Chinese expert has warned.

"The loss of sea ice has imposed breeding pressure on emperor penguins, which rely on stable sea ice for chick rearing," said Liang Qi, an associate professor at the School of Geospatial Engineering and Science at Sun Yat-sen University.

"Meanwhile, as ocean temperatures rise, Antarctic krill — their key prey — have shifted their distribution toward higher latitudes. This has lengthened the foraging distance of penguins to some extent, increasing their energy expenditure during the breeding season," Liang said.

Liang recently carried out research and multiple unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, survey flights in the penguin breeding area on Adelie Island in Antarctica as part of a Chinese Antarctic expedition.

The expedition team returned to Shanghai aboard the polar icebreaker *Xuelong*, or Snow Dragon, in April following a 160-day voyage to Antarctica. It was part of the country's 42nd Antarctic expedition to the world's southernmost region and achieved fruitful scientific research outcomes.

"Previously, we mainly monitored penguin populations using remote-sensing satellite data. Now remote sensing methods face several limitations in penguin identification, fine characterization of habitats and population inversion due to poor algorithm generalization and a lack of ground observation validation samples," Liang said.

In addition to measuring individual penguins' body size, Liang also accurately identified and mapped penguin nests. "In the past, we mainly relied on satellite monitoring, but satellites operate at a long distance and are easily affected by weather conditions. The application of drones has provided solutions to these problems," he said.

The number of penguin nests, or breeding pairs, is a key indicator for assessing the current population size in penguin habitats and predicting future population dynamics. It is also one of the core parameters recorded in on-site Antarctic penguin surveys.

Under normal circumstances, expedition team members must endure harsh Antarctic conditions and make repeated trips to penguin breeding colonies to obtain data through manual counting.

By using drone photography, however, Liang achieved accurate identification and counting of penguin nests in the colonies.

During the expedition, Liang completed more than 60 drone flights and obtained various observational data on penguin habitats, including visible light, multispectral, thermal infrared and Light Detection and Ranging, or LiDAR, data.

In addition, he conducted ground-based Simultaneous Localization and Mapping, or SLAM, scanning to measure penguin morphology. Penguins are widely distributed across the Fildes Peninsula, Liang said.

To implement the integrated space-air-ground observation system, Liang sometimes had to hike 10 kilometers through the field to reach penguin habitats for spectral measurements and manual population counts, with a total round trip spanning 20 km.

"The survey conducts penguin habitat observations simultaneously on satellite, unmanned aerial vehicle and ground-based platforms, enabling more refined satellite remote-sensing observations of Antarctic penguin populations," he said.

"This survey will provide important support for the subsequent establishment of a large-scale spatial and long-term time-series monitoring network for Antarctic penguin population dynamics," he added.

Liang said he can currently only reveal some preliminary data because final data analysis is still underway and requires more time.

According to Liang, Antarctica has four of the most common penguin species — emperor penguins, Adelie penguins, chinstrap penguins and gentoo penguins — with a total population of roughly tens of millions.

Liang said protecting penguins requires an urgent, two-pronged approach of monitoring and emission reduction.

A large-scale, high-frequency monitoring network should be established using multisource satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to gain a deeper understanding of changes in penguin population distribution and habitat conditions, he said.

Meanwhile, slowing the rate of ocean warming and maintaining the physical stability of the Antarctic sea ice and fast-ice system would buy valuable time for the restoration of penguin breeding habitats, he added.

Hu Xiaotong contributed to this story.

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CHINA

Aerial firefighter



Visitors view a 2-metric-ton electric vertical takeoff and landing, or eVTOL, aircraft designed for firefighting and rescue at the 5th Yangtze River Delta International Emergency Disaster Reduction and Rescue Expo in Shanghai on Thursday. The event focuses on building grassroots emergency capacity, promoting a safety culture, coordinating responses, and more. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Novel mass printing material developed

By LI MENGHAN
limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

Have you ever wondered how a peacock's tail shimmers with brilliant blues and greens, or why a butterfly's wings flash colors that never fade? These are not paints or dyes, but "structural colors" — hues created entirely by microscopic structures that trap, bend and scatter light.

For years, scientists have tried to copy nature's approach to create vivid, long-lasting colors for uses that range from anti-counterfeiting labels to flexible displays. Now, researchers have taken a major step forward by developing a new type of optical metamaterial that gives them more precise control over microscopic structures, along with a production method that is as fast and inexpensive as printing a newspaper. Their findings were published in the journal Nature on April 22.

An optical metamaterial is a man-made material engineered to control light in unusual ways. Instead of relying on the natural properties of ordinary materials, scientists build tiny patterns smaller than a human hair that can bend, reflect and guide light with extreme precision.

One important use is structural coloration, whereby microscopic patterns create colors without pigments or dyes. The technology could lead to fade-resistant paints, secure holograms and energy-efficient displays. Scientists also see optical metamaterials as an important technology for future advances in optics, communications, high-end manufacturing and defense.

However, most earlier studies focused on structures built at only one scale, limiting scientists' ability to control light. Manufacturing also depended on highly specialized, but slow and expensive equipment. As a result, producing a sample as small as a fingernail could take days, keeping the technology largely confined to laboratories.

Now, a research team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the National University of Singapore says it has overcome the long-standing challenge of balancing quality, customization and low cost.

The team designed a new multi-scale structure made of tiny dome-shaped surfaces combined with nanoscale crystal-like patterns. The researchers likened the design to a symphony orchestra, where different parts work together to control different properties of light. This gives scientists a multitude of ways to fine-tune how light behaves.

The researchers also developed a roll-to-roll nanoprinting system. It works much like newspaper printing: a flexible plastic sheet moves continuously through a high-precision printer that stamps nanoscale patterns onto the surface before rolling up as a finished product.

Using the method, the team expanded production from millimeter-sized test samples to sheets measuring meters wide — a thousandfold increase — without sacrificing quality.

Reviewers at Nature praised the breakthrough, saying the printing strategy is both novel and attractive.

Song Yanlin, the study's corresponding author and researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Chemistry, said the work combines materials science, optics and advanced manufacturing.

"Our roll-to-roll nanoprinting technology makes producing optical metamaterials as simple and efficient as printing a newspaper or a book," Song said. "It not only lowers costs and improves production efficiency, but also allows us to customize the optical properties of each metamaterial pixel on demand, opening new possibilities for micro-nano optics research."

Li Kaixuan, the study's first author and a doctoral graduate of the Institute of Chemistry, said a metamaterial film measuring 1 meter long and 30 centimeters wide can be printed in just 10 minutes. The process requires only 1 milliliter of a special nanoparticle ink, costing no more than 10 yuan ($1.5) per ml.

Li also highlighted the technology's broad potential applications. These include highly sensitive biosensors that can strengthen optical signals from viruses, helping detect infections that are otherwise difficult to identify, as well as photonic chips for VR and AR devices that could improve data transmission efficiency.

Rice-fish co-culture system hikes yields, study finds

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

In collaboration with scientists from 18 countries, a research team from Shanghai-based East China University of Science and Technology has confirmed the benefits of the ancient rice-fish co-culture farming method, offering a scientific pathway for ecological agriculture and food security.

Their study validated that the traditional practice not only boosts rice yields, but also controls pests and diseases through ecological regulation. Rice yields in rice-fish co-culture systems increased by an average of 12.5 percent compared with traditional rice monoculture, according to their global data analysis.

Notably, the presence of fish nearly doubled the number of invertebrate predators and parasitoids in the fields, while pests decreased by 24.1 percent, diseases by 38.8 percent and weeds by 45.7 percent.

"Such research results provide a scalable solution with high ecological and production benefits to address global challenges such as food security, pesticide reduction, agricultural non-point source pollution and biodiversity loss," said Wan Nianfeng, a lead scientist on the research team and a professor at the university's School of Pharmacy.

A paper on the research, conducted by Chinese researchers in collaboration with peers from countries including the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Switzerland and Spain, was published as a cover article in Current Biology, a Cell Press journal, on Monday.

The practice of integrating rice cultivation with fish farming dates back 2,000 years to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), with archaeological evidence supporting its historical use.

The rice-fish co-culture system in Qingtian county of Lishui city, Zhejiang province, was the first in China to be designated as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2005.

The research team said it discovered how the rice-fish co-culture mechanism enhances production through pathway analysis. In the two-trophic-level relationship between rice and pests, the method directly suppresses harmful organisms to boost yields. In the three-trophic-level relationship among rice, pests and natural enemies, it increases the number of natural enemies to suppress pests, achieving indirect yield enhancement.

"Remarkably, this top-down control effect persists across organic and nonorganic systems and in both temperate and tropical regions, forming a clear ecological chain in which rice-fish co-culture promotes natural enemy populations, which suppress pests and ultimately enhance rice productivity," Wan said.

To further verify the global effect, the team conducted a four-year field experiment. The results showed that compared with rice monoculture areas, rice-fish co-culture areas had significantly fewer pests, while the number of predatory spiders increased.

The researchers also found that both the thousand-grain weight and overall yield of rice improved. Pathway analysis reconfirmed that rice-fish co-culture enhances natural enemy populations to suppress pests, achieving indirect yield enhancement.

Pot behavior experiments further clarified the mechanism. The research team observed that fish species such as crucian carp and red carp prefer feeding on pests like brown planthoppers, but do not prey on predatory spiders.

"It suggested that fish play the role of 'precision regulators' in rice fields, directly reducing pests while protecting and reinforcing the natural 'pest control army', thereby establishing an efficient cooperative network for pest control," Wan said.

New action plan bolsters family farms

Growers will be encouraged to develop modern, green agricultural businesses

By ZHAO YIMENG
zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

China has unveiled a new action plan aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of modern agricultural business entities, encouraging smallholder farmers to develop green and efficient family farms while boosting rural incomes.

The plan, released this week by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, calls for stronger support for family farms and closer integration between smallholder farmers and modern agriculture.

Local authorities are encouraged to guide willing farmers toward developing moderately scaled, intensive, green and efficient family farms, the plan said.

China has been promoting new agricultural operators such as family farms, cooperatives and agricultural service providers to improve productivity and advance modern agriculture, according to central documents related to agriculture and rural affairs.

Local governments will adopt differentiated support measures for family farms at different stages of development, while encouraging farms to determine appropriate operating scales based on land conditions, industrial characteristics and local agricultural services, the plan said.

The ministry also pledged to improve management of a national registry for family farms and encourage qualified operators to formally register as business entities.

A digital service system will be promoted to allow farms to display information about their operations and products to consumers while connecting them with supply-chain companies and financial institutions.

Authorities also plan to broaden the platform's functions by integrating logistics, weather alerts and product traceability services, according to the plan.

To improve agricultural productivity, the ministry said it would expand socialized agricultural services, particularly in grain and major agricultural product production, with a focus on supporting smallholder farmers and addressing weak links in agricultural production.

China also plans to strengthen digital management systems for agricultural operators and improve monitoring of grain- and oil-producing family farms and cooperatives that receive government financial support.

The plan highlighted the importance of technology and innovation, encouraging agricultural operators to work with universities, research institutes and enterprises to promote new crop varieties, technologies, equipment and production models.

It also supports the development of leisure agriculture, rural tourism and e-commerce. Agricultural operators are expected to establish regional and independent brands and improve cold-chain logistics, storage and processing capacity.

The ministry said it would support broader financing channels for agricultural operators, including the use of agricultural facilities and livestock as collateral for loans and leveraging the national agricultural credit guarantee system.

To strengthen income growth among small-scale farmers, authorities will encourage family farms and cooperatives to establish closer benefit-sharing mechanisms with rural households through land-use rights, employment opportunities and dividend distribution.

Local governments are expected to link policy support with the effectiveness of agricultural operators in increasing farmers' incomes, including the number of households assisted and the income growth achieved, according to the plan.



Farmers harvest rapeseed in the fields in Dazhou, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. DENG LIANGKUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Gene therapy can address congenital deafness

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

All congenital deafness patients who completed the effective 2.5-year follow-up in a nationwide multicenter clinical study experienced hearing restoration to the level of understanding everyday conversations after receiving a gene therapy.

Among them, 57 percent were able to recognize the sound of pages turning in a quiet library, and 43 percent could hear whispers.

Led by the Shanghai-based Eye and ENT Hospital of Fudan University, the clinical study involved 42 patients in the 9 months to 32 years age range. The gene therapy requires just a single injection.

Globally, it is the earliest, largest and longest-followed clinical study in the field of gene therapy for deafness, encompassing both the youngest and oldest patients reported worldwide.

A paper on the study, conducted jointly by eight hospitals across the country, was published on the website of the journal Nature on April 22.

Experts said that among the 26 million congenital deafness sufferers worldwide, the DFNB9 type caused by the OTOF gene mutation is particularly severe, often resulting in profound bilateral hearing loss from birth. The condition significantly affects language and cognitive development.

The team, led by Shu Yilai at the Shanghai hospital, has long focused on gene therapy for deafness and developed a safe and effective OTOF gene therapy system, pioneering the first clinical trial in 2022.

Published in journals including The Lancet in 2024, their work has been praised by international peers, who say it could open a new era for treating hearing impairment and other diseases through gene therapy.

The multicenter clinical research published this time aimed to reveal long-term patterns of improvement in patients' hearing and speech and identify key factors influencing treatment efficacy.

The research found that younger patients, particularly those aged 5 months to 3 years, showed more significant improvements than adults. Additionally, patients who exhibited responses in Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions, or DPOAE, before treatment tended to have better hearing recovery.

The therapy also proved effective for adult patients, researchers said. Among the three trial participants over 20 years old, two showed marked hearing improvement.

Zhang Wenxi was 32 when she underwent the treatment in 2024. She had congenital profound deafness and received a cochlear implant at age 6.

"On the second morning after receiving the gene therapy, it was the first time in my life that I heard the sound of running water from a faucet," she said, adding that her hearing improved from being able to detect sounds at 100 decibels before treatment to about 55 decibels now.

"The sounds I had never heard before opened the door to a new world for me. It is truly an incredible journey of rebirth," said Zhang, a mother of a 4-year-old child.

She added that the natural sounds she now hears are very different from those perceived through the cochlear implant, particularly in distinguishing sounds in noisy environments and locating their source.

Shu, the lead scientist of the research and a co-corresponding author of the paper, said that as patients' hearing improves, their speech abilities also improve.

"In particular, their enhanced ability to recognize speech in noisy and complex auditory environments will allow them to better integrate into everyday social, educational and life scenarios, and truly enjoy natural hearing," he said.

The study also included three international patients from the United States, South Korea and India, Shu said, adding that the work has attracted global attention, with patients across the world contacting the team via email.

Zhou Xingtao, president of the hospital, said the institution will continue to support efforts to develop and optimize the treatment and expand it to more types of deafness, as well as to fields such as vision and olfaction — the sense of smell.

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CULTURE



The artist behind the author

Prominent writer returns to painting and presents new exhibition depicting scenes from youth and memory across many years of work, **Lin Qi** reports.

When Yung Liu, widely known as Liu Yong, talks about observing begonias, he doesn't just describe them. He performs them. He extends his forearms, bends his wrists, and lets his body sway, tracing the arc of branches and the quiet tension of leaves unfurling. The gesture is instinctive, almost childlike. His eyes light up as he drifts into memory — Taipei night markets alive with open-air opera, food stalls steaming under dim bulbs, and the hum of a city that shaped him. Then, unexpectedly, his voice falters. He recalls fishing trips with his father, and emotion breaks through.

At 77, Liu is not discussing his literary career — the one that made him a household name across Chinese-speaking communities.

Instead, he is revealing a parallel life that has long run beneath the surface: painting. Now, that side of him has taken center stage. At the National Museum of China in Beijing, Liu presents *Poetic Years: Dreams Flow into Paintings*, an exhibition of 89 works in traditional Chinese ink styles, on display through June 8. The show charts decades of exploration — from flower-and-bird compositions and tranquil moonlit scenes to lively reinterpretations of urban life reminiscent of the 12th-century classic *Qingming Shanghe Tu* (Along the River During the Qingming Festival), but filtered through a modern sensibility.

The exhibition also marks a personal return. More than 30 years ago, Liu frequented the same institution — then known as the National Museum of Chinese History — gathering material as a television scriptwriter exploring Chinese civilization.

"I visited many times, for there were so many artifacts of great importance here," he says, adding that the "serendipity" and "decades of hard work" have brought him back, so that he can rekindle his link with the national museum and, this time, with his own art.

Liu's reputation as a writer is formidable. Since the 1970s, he has produced best-selling essays, fables and art theories, often drawing on everyday life to distill reflections on human nature, resilience, and time.

"His prose is known for its philosophical clarity, wit and understated humor, qualities that also permeate his paintings," says Huang Xiaojiao, the exhibition's curator at the National Museum of China.

For Liu, the connection is inseparable. "These paintings are my heart and soul," he says. "When I look at them, I feel renewed."

He is keen, however, to correct a common assumption: writing may be what most people know him for, but painting came first.

"I want people to see the whole of my world," he explains. "Writing is familiar to readers. But painting — that's my true profession."

That claim is not rhetorical. Liu showed early promise as a painter in his teens. He studied under Hu Nianzu (1927-2019), a respected figure in the mountain-and-water style of classical Chinese painting who hailed from Hunan province. And he won prizes in school art competitions.

His technical foundation was solid from the start. One of the earliest works in the exhibition — a 3.5-meter handscroll of historical figures completed in 1964 when he was just 15 — demonstrates both discipline and ambition.

Another early piece, created in 1966, captures cascading mountain springs shrouded in mist. It was inspired by a grueling winter hike. "It rained heavily. The paths were muddy and dangerous," Liu recalls. "I came home soaked. But instead of resting, I painted it and finished in about an hour.

"When I see it now, I remember that feeling — the energy and enthusiasm of a 17-year-old."

Liu went on to study fine arts at Taiwan Normal University, graduating in 1972 before taking a position as a high school art teacher.

Throughout the 1970s, he exhibited and wrote about Chinese painting in Taiwan, as well as cities in Europe and the United States.

Even as his literary career gained prominence, he never abandoned painting. Instead, the two practices evolved in parallel — each informing the other.

While his artistic influences are rooted in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), widely considered the pinnacle of Chinese art, Liu has never been content with imitation. Living and working in the West exposed him to new ideas, prompting him to experiment with unconventional techniques.



Top: Veteran artist Yung Liu (center) at the exhibition opening, noting that nature has long nourished his landscape paintings. **Above:** Liu being interviewed in front of his work *Night Hunt*. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY







Clockwise from above left: *Shujuan* (Volumes of Books), one of four paintings Liu has donated to the National Museum. *Celebrating the Lantern Festival at Longshan Temple.* A painting by Liu depicting night-blooming cactus. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

One such method involves spraying ink through a tube — a practice inspired by a childhood chore. As a boy, he helped his mother smooth wrinkled bedsheets by blowing water across the fabric. He also manipulates paper, repeatedly wrinkling and ironing it to create textured surfaces that interact unpredictably with ink.

These experimental approaches are evident in a series of large-scale works, including four paintings donated to the National Museum of China in 2025 that are now on show: *Chenxi* (Morning Glow), *Shuiyue* (Moon on Water), *Shujuan* (Volumes of Books), and *Jiangshan* (The Land).

Each vertical scroll rises more than 3.6 meters, echoing classical landscape traditions while subtly dismantling them. Details are pared down. Colors recede. What remains are distilled forms — mountain silhouettes, luminous moons, flowing lines — rendered through delicate contrasts of light and shadow. The effect is meditative, almost austere, inviting viewers into a space of stillness and introspection.

Liu says painting "not only captures a view, or shows a space, but also carries the weight of time in passing". That idea finds poignant expression in a pair of works displayed side by side. Both depict a porcelain vessel of flowers under moonlight, yet each tells a slightly different story.

Come Back in the Morning with a Harp if You'd Like shows a lotus pot in an empty classical Chinese garden, with a hollowed rock mountain on one side and a stone table and stools on the other side. *Beautiful Moon, Light Breeze, Night-Blooming Cactus* shows a vigorous cactus in an empty room, with curtains on both sides.

Liu says neither painting includes human figures. Yet traces of human activity are everywhere — an open book, a partially unrolled scroll, a toppled wine bottle, and curtains swaying.

Liu often works in pairs like this, exploring variations on a theme. The approach reflects his broader philosophy: that art should create a space where viewers feel compelled to linger, a long-held core value of Chinese painting.

"I want to paint scenes that people can enter," he says, "places where they can rest — not just physically, but emotionally."

In recent years, Liu has turned increasingly toward studying classical masterpieces. After turning 70, he began copying iconic works such as *Zaochun Tu* (Early Spring) by Guo Xi and *Xishan Xinglyu Tu* (Travelers among Mountains and Streams) by Fan Kuan, both living in the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). The process is rigorous and physical.

"I kneel on the floor and re-create each stroke," he says.

"One has to move forward boldly," Liu reflects, "but also look back and examine oneself."

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on



Poetry of textiles

The Tsinghua University Art Museum is home to a rich collection of vintage textiles. Its ongoing exhibition, *Creating a Poetic Realm with Silk*, features a curated selection of embroidered and woven pieces from ancient times. Running through April 2027, the show celebrates the varied history of textiles from a fresh perspective, highlighting the craftsmanship behind intricate designs where colorful threads and fine fabrics form calligraphic characters and painterly compositions in classical styles.

The themes range from popular motifs of flowers, fruits and birds to moral teachings and social etiquette, as well as symbolic objects reflecting the spiritual pursuits of ancient scholars and wishes for longevity and prosperity. Together, these works reveal the cultural depth, vigorous vitality and timeless charm of traditional handicrafts.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. Tsinghua University, Haidian district, Beijing. 010-6278-1012.

Modern landscapes

The 20th century saw growing exchanges between Eastern and Western artistic traditions in China. Artists experimented with blending classical mountain-and-water (*shanshui*) aesthetics with oil painting techniques. *Beyond the Mundane*, now on view at the He Xiangning Art Museum in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, reflects the institution's long-standing focus on modern Chinese art. The exhibition traces how artists over the past century reimagined landscape painting, pushing stylistic boundaries while engaging with tradition.

On view through May 31, it brings together works by 20 artists, including



Xu Beihong (1895-1953) and Dai Ze (1922-2023). Despite the challenges they faced, these artists turned to China's mountains and rivers as sources of national spirit and identity, capturing them with expressive, dynamic brushwork.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 9013 Shennan Dadao, Nanshan district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province. 0755-2660-4540.

Graduation show

Awakening in Colors, now open at the Art Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, marks the launch of the academy's annual "graduation season". The program, featuring exhibitions and campus bazaars, has become a major event for both professionals and the public. The current exhibition showcases works by master's and doctoral students graduating next month, on view through May 14, followed by an undergraduate presentation.

Once limited to the art community, CAFA's graduation shows have in recent years drawn large public crowds, with visitors often waiting in line outside the museum, many traveling from other cities. Guided tours for companies and cultural institutions are also organized, helping graduates connect with potential employers.

9:30 am-5:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 8 Huajiadi Nan Jie, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-6477-1575.



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Brewing ideas into fashion

A new generation of designers blends heritage with fresh perspectives to reach wider audiences, **He Qi** reports.



The final stage of the New Wave Fashion Awards, launched by the Shanghai Fashion Designers Association, was held during Shanghai Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2026. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Beneath the century-old red-brick arched windows of the former Gibb, Livingston & Co building at 100 Dianchi Road, the warm, mellow aroma of Fujian tea lingers in the air.

A century ago, this building was a key departure point for Chinese tea exports to the United Kingdom.

This March, designer Wang Fengchen transformed the building into Fengji Old Teahouse, a limited-time installation that bridges past and present. Inside, curated Fujian tea leaves from 2015 — the founding year of her eponymous label Feng Chen Wang — are displayed alongside the brand's landmark designs from the past decade.

For Wang, 2026 marks a pivotal moment. Ten years after establishing her brand in London, she returns with a clearer sense of direction and identity. As the first Chinese graduate to earn a master's degree in menswear from the Royal College of Art, she built her reputation through a distinctive deconstructed aesthetic that draws on Eastern cultural references while engaging global audiences. Her collections have appeared on the runways of Paris and New York, and her brand became the first Chinese designer label to enter the core retail zone of Galeries Lafayette in Paris.

For her brand's 10th anniversary, she chose to stage this landmark showcase in Shanghai with its first independent runway show in China.

"In the past, tea served as a cultural language connecting the world. Today, our design speaks as a language from the East to the world," Wang explains. "I set out from here a decade ago, and now I'm back. Shanghai is the root of my brand."

Her installation, which draws on the building's history of Sino-Western trade, is one of six curated creative spaces presented in the final stage of the inaugural New Wave Fashion Awards. Organized by the Shanghai Fashion Designers Association, the competition seeks to "identify creative directors for a new era".

Breaking from the traditional ready-to-wear-only judging model, it challenges six finalists to build full brand narrative spaces in Shanghai's key landmarks, testing their ability to turn design concepts into tangible experiences. Designers are required to coordinate resources, manage budgets and oversee every stage of execution, simulating the real-world responsibilities of a creative director.

As juror Cui Dan explains, the role today extends beyond design itself. "A creative director of the new era must not only convey a brand's worldview but also evoke public empathy through meticulous details."

If Wang's space is a narrative of heritage, brand motoguo's *We Eat Fear for Breakfast!* display at the Somekh Building is an emotional adventure — and among Angelo Flaccavento's top picks. Flaccavento, a renowned international fashion critic, traveled especially from Milan to serve as a core juror for the competition.

Centered on the metaphor of "devouring fear", the space by designers Keek Wen Han and Eng Khai Wai mixes surreal, playful installations to build a bold brand universe. It transforms anxiety into courage and delivers emotional healing, while showcasing the brand's iconic, unisex designs and 10-year creative ethos.

Founded in 2015, motoguo has gained international recognition as the first Southeast Asian brand shortlisted for the LVMH Prize. Known for its whimsical, gender-neutral designs, the brand has appeared on international runways and chosen Shanghai as its core development base. Over the past decade, the duo has navigated industry challenges and downturns, ultimately cultivating a loyal community in Shanghai.

"Shanghai is a place where people can pursue their dreams, and it has given us so much support," Keek says.

"A creative director must have a comprehensive brand worldview, and we hope to deliver emotional value and healing to people," Eng says. The duo received the Future Force Award, recognizing both their creative direction and sustained development.

Other finalists present equally distinct narratives through their installations. Gong Li's project for 8ON8 continues his long-standing exploration of "comfortable avant-garde", balancing experimentation with wearability. Angus Chiang marks the 10th anniversary of his brand with *PARC*, a playful, park-like environment featuring interactive elements and signature works.

Li Wen, who transitioned from architecture to fashion, brings a spatial perspective to her installation *Where Shadows Rest* for MAYALI. Her work treats clothing as "architecture for the human body".

Among the finalists, Chen Sifan stands out as the youngest participant. His *Keting-LivingRoom* space at Film Park on Jiashan Road brings design into a familiar, domestic setting, making it more accessible to a broader audience. His project earned the Public Impact Award. "Thank you to the competition for giving creators like us, without funding or a platform, a chance to speak out," he says.

"It's a very interesting competition," says Flaccavento. Over five days, he visited all six installations, experiencing the works within their intended contexts rather than through the conventional runway format.

"What I liked about this award is that we were not shown just clothes, but clothes in an environment that was built to express the vision of the designers." In his view, the competition's greatest vision is its accurate understanding of the core role of a modern creative director. "They're acknowledging the role of the creative director in contemporary fashion, and sourcing from local designers. It's a visionary idea."

Flaccavento also highlights the strength of Chinese designers in building communities: "The clientele is someone who shares your values and vision, and then buys your clothes — it's more organic." He adds that this value-driven, organic bond is the enduring lifeblood of the fashion industry.

"Fashion is a global language. Chinese fashion is part of a broader movement, reflecting local culture while contributing to global dialogue," Flaccavento points out. "While not all Chinese designers achieve international competitiveness, those who do are sophisticated, refined, and their way of working with local crafts and culture can be showcased in Paris."

The broader industry context reinforces this momentum. Since its establishment in 2003, Shanghai Fashion Week has supported nearly 1,000 independent Chinese designers. In the 2026 autumn/winter season, it showcased around 1,000 brands and hosted 92 debut shows, achieving an 18.7 percent increase in business transactions and record-high orders for designer labels. These figures point to both growth and increasing influence.

This competition is just the beginning, says Lyu Xiaolei, secretary-general of Shanghai Fashion Week Organizing Committee. She adds that the SFDA will keep launching systematic talent support, including a new designer competition with the social media platform Douyin, to offer full-chain help for Chinese creative talents.

"The new wave of Chinese design is just setting sail," Lyu says.

Contact the writer at heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

International opera collaborations strike power chord

By **ZHANG KUN**
zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn





Left: Katharina Wagner, Richard Wagner's great-granddaughter and artistic director of the Bayreuth Festival, speaks about the new opera production of *Die Walkure* in Shanghai. **Right:** Scenes from the Shanghai Opera House production of *Turandot*, which was performed at Shangyin Opera House from April 24 to 26. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The recent premieres of two major opera productions in Shanghai have underscored audiences' growing enthusiasm for classic opera while highlighting the city's emergence as an international hub for opera creation and production.

From April 24 to 26, a new production of Richard Wagner's *Die Walkure* premiered at Shanghai Grand Theatre under the direction of Katharina Wagner, great-granddaughter of the composer and artistic director of the Bayreuth Festival, one of the world's most prestigious Wagner festivals.

The opera is the second installment of the Bayreuth in Shanghai Three-Year Opera Project, which will stage three major Wagner works — *Tristan and Isolde*, *Die Walkure* and *Tannhauser* — between 2025 and 2027.

Featuring a stage design inspired by video-game aesthetics, the production seeks to attract younger audiences by presenting the characters as players in *The Ring Game*. The physically demanding staging requires performers to climb structures as high as nine meters while maintaining vocal control throughout the five-hour opera.

Die Walkure, the second part of Wagner's monumental *Der Ring des Nibelungen* cycle, is conductor Xu Zhong's favorite Wagner opera.

"From the theatrical, musical and character perspectives, *Die Walkure* is my favorite as a conductor," says Xu, who also serves as artistic director of Shanghai Opera House. "The complex emotional dynamics among the characters provide immense space for collaboration between singers and orchestra."

According to Zhang Xiaoding, general manager of Shanghai Grand Theatre, the production signals a broader shift from being primarily a performance venue to becoming a center for opera creation and production.

The Bayreuth in Shanghai project was realized because the German festival is "optimistic about Shanghai", she says, "from the city's cultural temperament to the audience's familiarity with classical music, they believe the future opera market lies in China, in Shanghai".

At the same time, Shanghai Opera House staged three sold-out performances of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot* at Shangyin Opera House to commemorate the centenary of the opera's premiere in Italy.

According to Zhang Qingxin, vice-president of Shanghai Opera House, even additional temporary seats sold out a week before opening night.

"I never expected this could happen with opera performances here," says Shi Yijie, president of Shanghai Opera House.

"It's just a coincidence that two big opera productions are staged in the city at the same time," he tells the media before the premiere. "I was told that both operas are sold out already. This is absolutely beyond expectations."

Such strong box-office performance not only confirms Shanghai audiences' passion for classic opera, but also reflects that high-quality coproductions between China and foreign countries are becoming an important driving force for the city's cultural vitality, he says.

The new *Turandot* retained the stage design created by Roberto Ando for the 2018 production and featured tenors and sopranos from China, Italy and Norway.

Director Marco Gandini describes the production as especially meaningful because the opera's story is set in China.

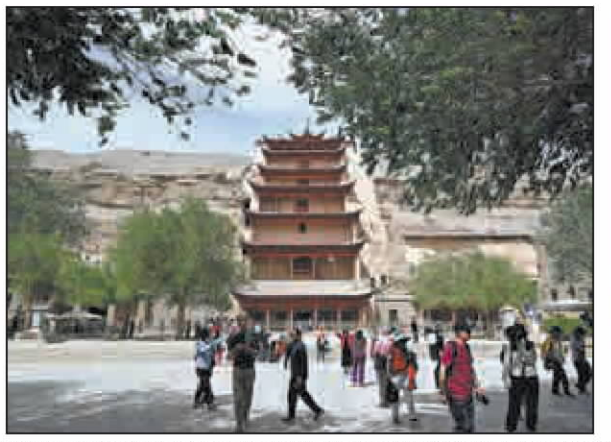
This is the fifth time Gandini has created a production of *Turandot*. "I brought together all the experience and knowledge I've gained over 40 years of opera production around the world," he says, praising the dynamic stage performance, passionate acting and depth of the interpretation.

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LIFE







From left: Tourists enjoy spring blossoms near the Big Air ski slope in Shougang Park in Beijing. LI WENMING / FOR CHINA DAILY Visitors explore the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province, a classic example of "living heritage". ZHANG XIAOLIANG / XINHUA Exterior view of Shougang Park's No 3 Blast Furnace, which has been converted into a digital museum. CHEN ZHONGHAO / XINHUA

Keeping the fires burning

More than a decade after its furnaces fell silent, Beijing's Shougang Park is reigniting its industrial past through digital technology and exploring what it truly means for heritage to stay alive, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Inside Shougang Park's No 3 Blast Furnace, a digital film named *Salute to Steel* is playing, projecting bright and roaring flames onto the furnace core, which has not burned for more than a decade.

In 2010, after more than 90 years of continuous operation, Shougang's steelmaking came to a halt. The sprawling industrial complex on the western edge of Beijing was relocated to neighboring Hebei province.

But people today are not leaving it idle. They are using artificial intelligence to reconstruct historical footage, projection mapping to turn the furnace walls into screens, and immersive surround sound to transform visitors from spectators into witnesses of a lost industrial age.

On April 15, three days before the International Day for Monuments and Sites, a group of heritage experts, retired steelworkers, and academics gathered at the RE Blast Furnace No 3 Digital Museum. The event, organized by the digital heritage committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites China, was timed to this year's global theme "Living Heritage".

Its purpose was to examine how digital technologies might support the active preservation and intergenerational transmission of industrial heritage — and to ask what it truly means for a heritage site to be "alive".

"Living heritage is not about the physical objects you can touch and measure. It is about the ongoing relationship between people and those objects," says Song Xinchao, chairman of ICOMOS China.

"Break that relationship, and the heritage dies, even if the building still stands, even if the furnace has not been torn down."

Over the course of its long history, China has witnessed many classic cases of living heritage — sites that never died because they were never abandoned by the people who used them.

Song urges relevant parties to draw inspiration from Dujiangyan in Southwest China's Sichuan province, an irrigation system built during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) that tamed the Minjiang River without a dam. Its designer, Li Bing, used the natural landscape to divert water, remove sediment, and control flooding. More than 2,000 years later, Dujiangyan still waters the fields of the provincial capital Chengdu.

"It has never been a ruin or a museum piece," Song notes. "It has simply worked, continuously, for over two millennia. That is living heritage."

He also considers the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, in Northwest China's Gansu province, a classic model. They are best known as a treasure house of Buddhist art — thousands of murals and sculptures carved into a cliff face along the ancient Silk Road.

But the grottoes are not only to be viewed from behind a rope, he elaborates.

Every year on the eighth day of the fourth month in the Chinese lunisolar calendar, local residents enter the caves to pray, a tradition dating back more than 1,000 years.

"The Dunhuang Academy, which manages the site, charges only a symbolic five-yuan (74 cents) admission on that day — not because it cannot charge more, but because the relationship between the caves and the surrounding community is itself a piece of heritage worth protecting," Song says.

The ritual keeps the caves alive in a way that climate control and security cameras never could, he adds.

In addition to war and the natural decay that threaten these heritages, Song warns that overcommercialization risks turning culture into a disposable product, and sealing heritage behind glass turns it into a museum specimen. Both approaches, he believes, can break the chain between people and place.

At Shougang Park, efforts have been underway to keep those heritage bonds alive. At the mid-April event, three retired employees donated personal items to root the place more deeply in its own history.



Retired Shougang employees donate personal memorabilia to the RE Blast Furnace No 3 Digital Museum in Beijing during a mid-April gathering. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Zhang Shijun, a retired Shougang worker, presents French newspapers from 1988 reporting on a 45-member Shougang delegation to France.

Zhang Shijun, in his 70s, walked up to the front and center of the themed day event, holding a few old French newspapers that he had kept for 38 years. He entered Shougang in 1980 after finishing metallurgical machinery and electrical engineering studies in college. In his younger days at work, he won just about every award a young employee could win.

"I can't document the past 100 years — I wasn't born yet," Zhang says with a smile. "But I can document 50 years."

The newspapers reported on a Shougang team that was sent to the northern French city of Calais in 1988 on a mission to dismantle an entire steel plant and ship the equipment back to China for reassembly. The timeline was pressing, and the 45 men of the team worked around the clock.

The coverage emphasized their exceptional efficiency, technical expertise, and strong work ethic, noting that they dismantled thousands of tons of equipment in months for immediate reassembly in China. The French report also framed Shougang's actions as evidence of China's impending economic rise.

By then, they could not have known that by 1994, Shougang would produce 8.24 million tons of steel annually, ranking it first in China, Zhang says with pride. Although the French newspapers are no longer in his hands, he says it gives him great comfort to see them enter the museum's collection.

Zhang's bond with Shougang is personal, forged over decades inside the plant. But today, Shougang's bond with its former employees has expanded to the public.

Shougang Park received over 13 million visitors in 2024, an 8 percent increase from the previous year.

But average spending per visitor was below the citywide average, and the park's service area is limited, considering daily visitors reached 150,000 during the 2022 Winter Olympics, according to Fu Fan, a professor at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture. Fu has conducted extensive research in the park area.

He notes that the official strategy blends culture, commerce, sports, tourism, technology, and science education, but says there are always ways to improve the visitor experience.

Fu suggests further tapping into the site's history, architecture, and nostalgia to develop a vessel — something that can be consumed, experienced, and shared — so the public and the industrial site can build a closer relationship.

Bu Xiting, a professor at the Communication University of China, offers a way forward, which he calls "cultural reproduction".

He points to the Tate Modern in London, a power plant built in the mid-20th century and now a world-famous museum that deliberately preserved its industrial space.

The lesson for Shougang, he says, is clear: "Instead of waiting 20 years for it to become waste, why not treat it today as an industrial design and an artistic statement?"

He emphasizes immersive experiences that invite visitors to step inside and take it all in.

"The space must wrap around them. The narrative must invite participation. The experience must engage all the senses: hearing, smell, touch, temperature," he says.

Besides envisioning Shougang as a new stage for cultural consumption, an incubator for technological innovation, and a laboratory for the digital economy, Bu says the key is to turn distant collective memory into personal experience — something that can be touched and felt.

At Shougang Park, the furnace no longer burns, but the event's participants concur that something else is burning now.

"The difficulty of preserving living heritage is that it depends on people — on oral transmission, on hand-me-down stories," Song says.

"But that is also its value. It is not a museum specimen. It is life still unfolding."

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Charting the world: China renews a tradition of global study

By WANG RU
wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

More than a century ago, in 1843, *Haiguo Tuzhi*, or the *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*, a Chinese gazetteer mainly compiled by scholar-official Wei Yuan (1794-1857), was printed and published in present-day Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. The publication was one of the earliest works compiled by modern Chinese people that introduced foreign countries, covering topics related to their politics, economics, military affairs, history, geography and culture.

The collection was so important because it broke the ideological shackles of the isolationism of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), allowing the Chinese of that era to open their eyes to the world through this book.

Wei's work laid the foundation for China's understanding of the world. Building on that spirit of openness, later scholars have continued to expand and deepen such research, culminating in the new edition of the *Guide to the World Nations and International Organizations Surveys*.

This is an academic program that aims to conduct systematic studies of the humanities and history, political economy, social governance, security and diplomacy of sovereign states around the world, as well as the historical evolution, institutional development and international influence of major organizations.





Left: The first eight books of the new edition of *Guide to the World Nations and International Organizations Surveys*, a major academic program studying countries and key global organizations. **Right:** A seminar organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to promote the first set of books. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The first batch of eight books, as the first phase of the program, has now been published, said the organizers of a seminar in Beijing on April 20. The new edition is based on an earlier version launched by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in the 1990s, covering 174 countries and 42 international organizations. The new edition expands this to 196 sovereign states and 60 major international organizations.

"The program is a large-scale, multivolume academic book series with a long history, grand scope, and distinctive representativeness in the fields of area and regional studies, both within the CASS and across China as a whole," says Yao Zhizhong, head of the bureau of international cooperation at the academy.

Zhao Rui, deputy director of the academy, says the new edition was written to meet the needs of the new era. "As we enter this new age, the world is undergoing unprecedented and accelerating transformations, the likes of which have not been seen in a century. Therefore, we must seek a more comprehensive, multidimensional, and in-depth understanding of the world to better serve the cause of building a community with a shared future for humanity."

Currently, 66 projects under the framework have been launched, involving invited experts from across China. The first batch of eight books includes volumes introducing the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Czech Republic, Fiji, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Zhao Chuandong, deputy director of the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences, says the new edition, while being informative and readable, aims to place greater emphasis on the academic nature and research value of the collection.

"Efforts should be made to achieve a balance between academic rigor and general readability," he says.

Liu Chenyang, head of the project to study the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, says that on the basis of a true, systematic and comprehensive introduction of APEC's progress and influence, their project will conduct an in-depth analysis of the role the organization can play in promoting cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and global governance in the new era.

"APEC brings together major political and economic powers from around the world. Its 21 member economies together account for half of global economic and trade volume. Not only does APEC play a primary role in regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, but its influence in the global governance system is also steadily increasing," he says.

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AMERICA FOCUS



Visitors check a BYD Seagull electric vehicle on display at the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition, or Auto China, in Beijing on April 26. XIAOYU YIN / REUTERS

Auto giants plug into China's battery power

Carmakers tap nation's cell chemistry, manufacturing scale and engineering talent

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Tesla has recently added Sunwoda Electronic as its fifth global power battery supplier, according to a report by 36kr, a Chinese technology and new economy platform.

Sunwoda manufactures third-generation lithium iron phosphate (LFP) cells known for fast charging speed, and has begun shipping them to Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory, according to the report. Those cells are going into Tesla cars built in Shanghai for export.

Tesla has a long-running relationship with China's CATL (Contemporary Amperex Technology Company), a global leader in renewable energy technology and the world's largest manufacturer of LFP and energy storage. It also sources LFP cells from BYD —including roughly 20 percent of the cells for its Shanghai Megafactory.

In September, Tesla signed a deal with China's EVE Energy to supply energy-storage cells for its European subsidiary from 2026 to 2030.

Industrial analyst Fred Lambert from Electrek said that by adding Sunwoda, "Tesla is prioritizing cost leverage over vertical integration" — the opposite of what CEO Elon Musk envisioned in 2020.

But Lambert considered Tesla's move "the right call" because Chinese LFP suppliers have been so efficient that it makes it "unnecessary" for Telsa to engineer its own.

Tesla is widely recognized as the largest single non-Chinese customer of the Chinese battery industry.

From multibillion-dollar joint ventures in Spain, Germany and Hungary to technology-licensing deals reshaping production in Michigan, the world's largest legacy automakers are increasingly dependent on Chinese cell chemistry, manufacturing scale and engineering talent.

They are racing to license, co-develop and source from Chinese battery champions — a realignment of the EV supply chain that puts Chinese chemistry, manufacturing know-how and capital at the center of the global EV transition.

European automakers have enjoyed the densest concentration of Chinese battery partnership outside Asia.

Global automotive group Stellantis formed a 50-50 joint venture with CATL to build a 4.1 billion euro ($4.8 billion) LFP gigafactory in Zaragoza, Spain. It is set to come online in late 2026 with capacity scaling toward 50 gigawatt-hours.

Stellantis makes American brands including Jeep, Ram, Dodge and Chrysler; European brands including Peugeot, Fiat, Citroën, Opel and Vauxhall; and luxury brands such as Maserati, Alfa Romeo, DS Automobiles, Lancia and Abarth.

Volkswagen has gone further by becoming the largest shareholder of Gotion High-Tech, a major Chinese battery manufacturer. It recently expanded its holding to more than 26 percent with a roughly $1 billion investment to fund a 2 GWh solid-state battery line targeted at next-generation VW and Audi vehicles.

In November, Gotion began mass production of the "unified cell" that VW selected as the standard format across most of its EV lineup. It is the cornerstone of Volkswagen's strategy to reduce battery costs by up to 50 percent across its entire vehicle lineup.

Thomas Schmall, chief technology officer of Volkswagen, speaking at Gotion's Unified Cell delivery ceremony in China last November, said that with the LFP unified cells now being produced in China and Germany, Volkswagen is "prepared to supply next-generation, highly competitive battery technologies across all Volkswagen brands".

"This makes Gotion a cornerstone of our global 'make-and-buy' battery strategy," he said.

A separate joint venture with Slovakia-based InoBat, in which Gotion owns 25 percent, is building a 20 GWh European plant scheduled to open in 2026.

BMW's largest cell partner since 2018 has been CATL. It has pivoted to all-electric models with its launch of Neue Klasse from 2025, and relies heavily on three Chinese manufacturers — SVOLT, CATL and EVE Energy — for battery supply.

According to industrial reports, the three Chinese battery companies have been building plants in Germany and Hungary to exclusively supply its next-generation cells in cylindrical 46 millimeter format that was designed by BMW.

It's estimated that BMW's Chinese cell content will exceed 60 percent of its global battery volume by 2027 when SVOLT, CATL and EVE are all fully ramped.

> "Combining our strengths allows us to develop products that set new standards globally."
>
> **Oliver Zipse,** chairman of the board of management of BMW AG

Oliver Zipse, chairman of the board of management of BMW AG, told Xinhua News Agency in September at the International Motor Show Germany in Munich that China's innovation is crucial for BMW's global strategy.

"Currently, the biggest innovations we see come out of China. Combining our strengths allows us to develop products that set new standards globally," Zipse said. "We have companies like CATL or EVE where we develop, blend and manufacture cells for our vehicles in China, but also outside of China."

In February, BMW and CATL signed an agreement to jointly develop and pilot the EU's Battery Passport — a digital traceability framework that will be required for European battery sales under the EU Battery Regulation from 2027 onward.

This is significant because it's an infrastructure-grade collaboration that goes beyond cell supply into shared compliance and sustainability tooling, industrial experts pointed out.

Another German automaker, Mercedes, formed a relationship with China's EV battery industry by acquiring an equity stake in China's Farasis Energy, which supplies batteries for Mercedes' flagship electric models. It also gets battery supplies from CATL's factory in Hungary.

In the US, Mercedes builds its EVs using cells from Envision AESC, a Chinese-owned battery maker.

In Asia, major automaker Toyota has a standing agreement with BYD to jointly develop battery-electric vehicles leveraging BYD's Blade Battery technology. Their partnership has produced China-market BEVs and is informing Toyota's broader LFP and solid-state roadmap.

It's another story in the US, where automakers are facing political pressure when it comes to using China's battery technology. That has led to far fewer US battery projects involving Chinese technology, compared to Europe.

In early 2023, Ford announced plans to build a $3.5 billion EV battery factory in Marshall, Michigan by licensing CATL's battery technology.

The deal immediately met challenges from US politicians who said that the deal could make an American company reliant on a Chinese company with links to the Chinese military. In 2025, CATL was listed as a Chinese military company by the US Department of Defense.

The battery factory, known as BlueOval Battery Park Michigan, also faced legal challenges from a group of local residents who argued against the project over issues of environment, rural identity, public participation in decision-making and national security.

Ford later scaled back the project and reduced its production capacity from 35 GWh to 20 GWh. Consequently, jobs were reduced to 1,700 from the planned 2,500.

Ford executives have repeatedly defended the project as the only viable path to building affordable LFP cells in the US at scale.

Lisa Drake, former VP at Ford and now president of Ford Energy, defended Ford's BlueOval Battery Park Michigan on various occasions.

She told Axios last June that "it probably would have taken us a decade to catch up and have LFP technology on our own with our own R&D."

"It's hard to innovate something when you've never seen it with your own eyes. That's why we need to bring it here," she said. "I'm convinced this is the right thing to do for the United States."

In December, Drake confirmed that Ford is widening the CATL relationship beyond automotive cells — Ford will use CATL-licensed LFP technology to manufacture stationary energy storage batteries at its Kentucky BlueOval SK facility.

"We have a licensing agreement, but we feel it's better to build these batteries in the United States with American workers, with our own Ford workers, and understand the IP, than import them like they're being done today," Ford CEO Jim Farley recently told Bloomberg. "The best way to compete with China is to get close to the IP and then run the plants at Ford."

In August, General Motors confirmed it will import CATL LFP cells to power the second-generation Chevrolet Bolt, which begins production at GM's Fairfax, Kansas plant in late 2025 and arrives in dealerships in 2026 at roughly $30,000.

GM said this deal was a stopgap before American production of LFP batteries can pick up the pace and replace the Chinese imports.

Representative John Moolenaar from Michigan publicly attacked the deal, calling GM's decision "disappointing to not only its customers and employees, but also to the American people."

In January, GM said its Fairfax plant will be transitioned to make other vehicles in mid to late 2027. The Bolt will be a limited-run model, and its production will end once the Fairfax facility transition is complete.

The US lost more than $34 billion in clean energy investment in 2025, of which $21 billion came from the EV battery sector, according to an analysis by E2, a US policy advocacy group of business leaders, investors and professionals.

While US politicians are finding ways to restrict China's battery technology to be employed by US automakers, the recent 2026 Beijing Auto Show revealed that China's EV battery technology has taken another big step forward.

Industrial experts attending the show said that a dozen battery manufacturers participated the event with massive booths — some larger than automakers — indicating the importance and central role of batteries in EV production.

CATL revealed six new battery technologies, and BYD unveiled Blade Battery 2.0 with a 625-mile (1,000 kilometer) range. They, along with EVE Energy, revealed new EV batteries that can be fully charged in five to 10 minutes.

BMW chair Zipse was at the Beijing Auto Show. He said in an TV interview that the auto show was "innovative" and "future oriented".

Zipse told Reuters in February that ignoring China, the world's top auto market, would put at risk future economic success, and cooperation with Beijing was fundamental.

"Those who close their minds to China's enormous market and innovation potential are missing out on great opportunities for global growth and economic success," he was quoted as saying.

The Iran war boosts Brazil's oil exports to China

By HÉLIO ROCHA
in Juiz de Fora, Brazil

Brazil's oil exports to China doubled in the first quarter as a result of the Iran war, according to federal government data compiled by the Brazil-China Business Council.

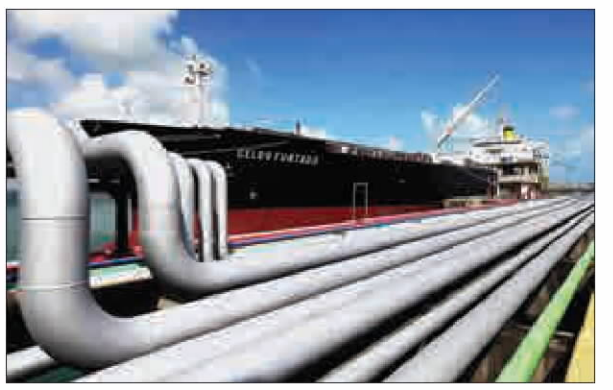
Oil export volume in the first three months totaled $7.2 billion, compared with $3.7 billion in the same period of 2025, an increase of 94.6 percent. In all, 16 million metric tons were shipped, a growth of 122 percent from the previous year.

The main reason, cited by producers and geopolitical experts, is the ease of shipping Brazilian oil compared with oil leaving the Persian Gulf. The war in the Middle East led Iran to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which most oil from Arab countries passes. Iran's war strategy appears to have offset the distance Brazilian oil must travel to reach China.

Marcio Felix, president of the Brazilian Association of Independent Oil Producers, told China Daily the sector was caught off guard.

"It's important to note that recent geopolitical events have indeed generated volatility and demand spikes in the international oil market," Felix said. "For independent producers in Brazil, the ability to respond to these moves is limited in the short term, since oil production is not easily adjustable on short notice, especially in mature assets."

Felix said, however, that "companies have sought to maximize operational efficiency, reduce unscheduled downtime and optimize their assets to capture market opportunities whenever possible" to cope with the unexpected increase in demand.



Oil tanker *Celso Furtado* destined for China is being loaded with oil off the Brazilian coast. TRANSPETRO / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The sector has acted with caution and planning. Facing a more uncertain international scenario, independent producers stress the importance of regulatory predictability and institutional stability, essential factors to enable medium and long-term investments."

Other sectors also grew in the wake of the Iran war, which indirectly affects the United States and the European Union. Beef sales totaled $1.3 billion, up 33.8 percent, while in the mining sector, iron alloys more than doubled in value to $478 billion, with niobium up 63 percent and nickel up 29 percent.

Felix explained that Brazil is reliable suppliers of raw materials and industrial goods to the world.

Brazil's Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade said in a statement: "China is Brazil's top trading partner. In 2025, exports reached $100 billion, and total trade flow reached $171 billion. Seasonality is a common factor in foreign trade for various products and destinations, but the trade level with China, especially exports, has remained high over the last 20 years, at a steady growth rate. Moreover, since 2013, China has been the top buyer of Brazilian oil."

Geopolitical analyst Marco Fernandes, a member of the BRICS Civil Council — the economic group bringing together the five emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — argued that Brazil's oil exports also exposed some weaknesses in Brazil's oil industry.

"Brazil benefits from higher oil export values," Fernandes said. "Given that the price per barrel has doubled from December 2025 levels, Brazil could set an export record this year, especially if the war drags on. However, this situation also exposes a Brazilian weakness: the country's insufficient oil refining capacity."

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Scarred forever
40 years after Chernobyl, safety questions remain
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Table tennis teams defend world titles despite many challenges
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

Special delivery



A Long March 7 rocket carrying the cargo spacecraft Tianzhou 10 blasts off from Wenchang Space Launch Center in South China's Hainan province on Monday. Tianzhou 10 is carrying supplies and propellants to China's Tiangong space station. The cargo craft successfully docked with the space station later on Monday. YANG ZHIYUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **See story, page 3**

Trade dialogue key to global stability and growth

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

A new round of China-US economic and trade talks is vital to reducing business uncertainties and improving global economic confidence amid persistent geopolitical and trade challenges, experts and business executives said on Monday.

According to information released by the Ministry of Commerce, Vice-Premier He Lifeng, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, will lead a delegation to hold economic and trade consultations with the United States in the Republic of Korea on Tuesday and Wednesday.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Monday that US President Donald Trump will pay a state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday, market watchers said the high-level interactions in the ROK are expected to further stabilize bilateral economic ties and keep the channels of effective communication open.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, the two sides will be guided by the important consensus reached between the two heads of state at their meeting in Busan and during previous calls, and will hold consultations on economic and trade issues of mutual concern.

Experts said the consultations between the world's largest and second-largest economies are likely to focus on trade, technology and supply chain concerns amid heightened global tensions.

Zhang Yilun, a research associate at the Washington-based Institute for China-America Studies, said the talks might help to create a smoother atmosphere ahead of the leaders' meeting in Beijing.

Raj Subramaniam, chairman of the US-China Business Council, said that direct and sustained dialogue between the US and China is critical for addressing complex economic challenges and advancing long-term stability and growth.

Zhao Minghao, a professor and deputy director of Fudan University's Center for American Studies, said the US leader's visit to China will provide an important opportunity for both sides to explore channels of engagement.

Zhao said that these interactions not only contribute to greater stability in the China-US relationship, but also improve expectations for restoring efficiency and predictability across global industrial and supply chains, underscoring that dialogue remains essential for managing differences and supporting practical cooperation.

Edgard Kagan, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington and former US ambassador to Malaysia, said that Washington's priorities include securing expanded Chinese rare earth supplies and establishing a framework for future bilateral discussions on artificial intelligence risks and safety, while Beijing seeks more stable ties and predictable US tariff policies.

Wu Xinbo, dean of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the Middle East conflict has heightened concerns over global energy security, shipping routes and regional stability, and both China and the US have strong incentives to prevent further escalation.

"Any consensus reached by the two sides on maintaining regional stability could carry broader global implications," Wu said.

Against this backdrop, Mei Xinyu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said that stable China-US business ties would support international trade flows, ease supply chain disruptions and improve investor confidence amid intensifying strategic competition.

Echoing the sentiment, Ian Shih, president for China at US industrial automation company Rockwell Automation, said that China's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and continued high-level opening-up provide strong support for companies seeking long-term growth and diversified application opportunities.

Lin Chunmei, president and general manager of Corning China, said the US industrial materials manufacturer will deepen localized manufacturing and innovation in sectors including display, optical communications and automobiles in China.

Head-of-state diplomacy to guide relations

Xi to hold in-depth exchanges with Trump during US president's state visit to China

By ZHAO JIA in Beijing
and **YIFAN XU** in Washington

Beijing said on Monday that it was ready to work with the United States to expand cooperation, manage differences and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world as it confirmed that US President Donald Trump will pay a three-day state visit to China starting from Wednesday.

According to Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun, President Xi Jinping will hold in-depth exchanges with Trump on issues concerning China-US relations as well as major issues related to world peace and development.

The visit will mark Trump's first trip to China during his second term in office and the first visit to China by a US president in nine years.

Noting that head-of-state diplomacy has played an irreplaceable strategic guiding role in China-US relations, Guo told a regular press briefing that China is willing to work with the US in the spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit to expand cooperation, manage differences and provide more stability and certainty for a transforming and volatile world.

Since Trump was reelected in November 2024, the two heads of state have spoken five times over the phone and held one face-to-face meeting, maintaining regular communication as Beijing and Washington seek to keep bilateral relations on a stable track.

Speaking on a television program on Sunday, Trump said that he was looking forward to visiting China again and believed the upcoming trip would be "amazing", adding that his relationship with President Xi was "very good".

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said head-of-state diplomacy has consistently served as the "anchor" of China-US relations.

Direct communication between the two leaders, she said, can help both sides better understand each other's intentions, avoid miscalculation, grasp the overall direction of bilateral ties and explore ways to build a stable relationship.

Diao Daming, a professor at Renmin University of China, said that given the complexity of China-US relations, the significance of Trump's visit lies not in resolving all issues at once, but in whether the two sides can use top-level communication to address each other's concerns and send more positive signals to the world.

Washington should view China objectively, develop a rational perception of China and work with Beijing in the same direction, rather than approach bilateral ties from a position of strength, he added.

He said that both sides should expand areas of cooperation, reduce the list of problems, and ensure that economic and trade ties continue to serve as a ballast and driver of bilateral relations rather than a source of friction and conflict.

Regarding the technological landscape, experts have pointed out a current "truce" that offers a window for structured dialogue.

Martin Chorzempa, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said during an event last week that "the technology front looks relatively calm compared to past administrations".

Chorzempa suggested that high-level engagement could help cement this atmosphere, noting that many restrictive measures have been "walked back or paused" over the last year.

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies, told China Daily that extending the trade and technology truces established at earlier high-level meetings remains a top priority.

*See **Visit,** page 3*

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STRAWBERRY ADDS FLAVOR TO SUMMER MUSIC SCENE

As festival season arrives, events across the country tap into the beat of China's creative pulse

By CHEN NAN
chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

On a bright morning on the outskirts of Beijing's Yanqing district, a dusty field was already stirring. Tents were being pitched, food stalls rolled into place, and festivalgoers arrived in small clusters, backpacks slung over their shoulders and sneakers dusted with dirt.

The Strawberry Music Festival, which has grown into a staple of China's summer music scene, was about to begin its three-day run on May 2.

Attendees, who had traveled from across the country, carried homemade banners, while others shared snacks on picnic blankets.

Among the visitors was Stephanie Daniels, a British musician who performs under the name SCAPA. It was her first visit to China. After a week of exploring Beijing's studios and collaborating with local artists, she found that the festival offered a more visceral indicator of the country's creative pulse.

"It felt very genuine," she said. "People were there for the music, for the vibe."



Audiences watch a performance at the Strawberry Music Festival in Dongguan, Guangdong province, on May 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The festival featured bands fusing local traditions with global influences. Daniels was particularly impressed by Sound Fragment, a six-member ensemble blending brass with traditional Chinese instruments.

Fans, many in their 20s, absorbed the performances with rapt attention.

"Even if I don't know the lyrics, I feel it in the beat," Daniels said.

By the late afternoon, the festival ground was abuzz with creative activity. Attendees tried out instruments at workshops, contributed to art installations and joined impromptu games of cards and badminton.

As the music shifted toward the evening sets, the air grew thick with energy, laughter and the smell of street food. Daniels moved through the crowd, observing, sampling snacks and soaking in the communal atmosphere.

"To my surprise, there was even a health pop-up at the festival," wrote Jiu Yue, who attended the festival on May 2, on her social media. "As people who love having fun, but also don't want to get exhausted, we discovered a completely different kind of music festival experience here. At the pop-up, we could get a health checkup and even try out a massage."

For many, the Strawberry Music Festival and events of its kind are living laboratories of youth culture — where global sounds meet local traditions, and temporary communities form out of shared curiosity and joy. By sunset, the field was a sea of blankets, instruments and smiling faces — messy, loud and imperfect, yet buzzing with a sense of life and artistry.

*See **Festival,** page 3*

Inclusive tech a must for common progress

WORLD WATCH
By Moiz Farooq

China has entered a new chapter in which innovation stands at the center of national progress. Once known mainly for its manufacturing strength, China has emerged as one of the world's key players in technology.

From artificial intelligence to next-generation communication networks, and from advanced industrial systems to green technology, China is making great contributions to global progress.

These achievements are not accidental. They are the result of long-term planning, stable governance and a national vision that prioritizes science, technology and innovation as a core driver of economic and social advancement.

In an increasingly competitive world, China's growing technological strength is creating new opportunities both at home and across the international community.

China's approach to innovation is guided by a clear vision for long-term development.

The country understands that high-quality growth requires strong scientific foundations and advanced technological capacity.

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INDEPTH





A vet examines recovering Chief Huang at Xuancheng Chongfuxin Pet Hospital on Friday. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY





Left: A screenshot from a video about the rescue shows a taxi driver carrying the injured stray Chief Huang from the bushes after the accident near Xuancheng Railway Station in Anhui province in April.
Middle: Visiting tourists pose with a cardboard image of Chief Huang at the station on Friday. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Another screenshot from the video shows the list of donations made by taxi drivers with their license plate numbers and donation amounts.

Taxi drivers' dog rescue triggers tourism boom

Story of kindhearted efforts to save injured stray touches netizens nationwide

By **ZHU LIXIN** in Hefei
zhulixin@chinadaily.com.cn

Xuancheng — a city in Anhui province best known for producing quality paper — is experiencing a mini tourism boom thanks to a stray dog and a group of kindhearted taxi drivers who came to its rescue.

The story of "Chief Huang" a gentle rural mutt that had made Xuancheng Railway Station its home, has captured the country's imagination with tens of millions of online views.

On one platform, Douyin, a local animal rescue blogger Wang Mingxuan posted a video he filmed about the rescue, which received 368,000 likes and 100,000 shares and comments.

The dog was nearly killed after being hit by a car in mid-April, but was eventually saved by a group of local taxi drivers who banded together to pay the medical bill.

In what they have dubbed "boomerang love" tourists traveled to Xuancheng, a city of some 2.7 million people, during the May Day holiday, to return the act of kindness.

"It brought tears to my eyes," wrote one netizen. "In this fast-paced society, it's already a touching story that there's a group of people willing to stop and help a little dog. Moreover, these are people who rely on every minute to earn a living for their families. I'm grateful that there is such goodness in this world."

Little yellow dog

Taxi driver He Wei said he first noticed the little yellow dog hanging around the railway station in August or September of last year.

"At that time, it was very small and skinny, sometimes staying in the taxi waiting area, sometimes wandering around the square, quiet and gentle, never barking or running around," He said. "Over time, this little dog became fixed in many people's hearts."

Taxi drivers coming and going often played with it and brought it eggs and sausages to eat.

"As soon as one of the drivers called it, it would happily run over, wagging its tail," said He.

At first, the drivers called the puppy Xiaohuang, literally "little yellow". But as it grew, they gave it a more majestic name — Chief Huang.

By January, some of the local taxi drivers had pooled enough money to have the female dog spayed in a pet hospital. If the stray dog got pregnant, her life would become harder, the drivers reasoned.

"Chief Huang was a ray of light in my gloomy days," said He, who runs a poster design business online during the day, and drives for a ride-hailing service at night.

"One night, I parked my car near the square, lit a cigarette in frustration, and Chief Huang came to sit beside me. We sat quietly together for a long time," He said.

Every time he drove a taxi, He would go to the square to find the dog. Only after seeing it and playing with the dog, "just like an old friend," would he feel at ease.

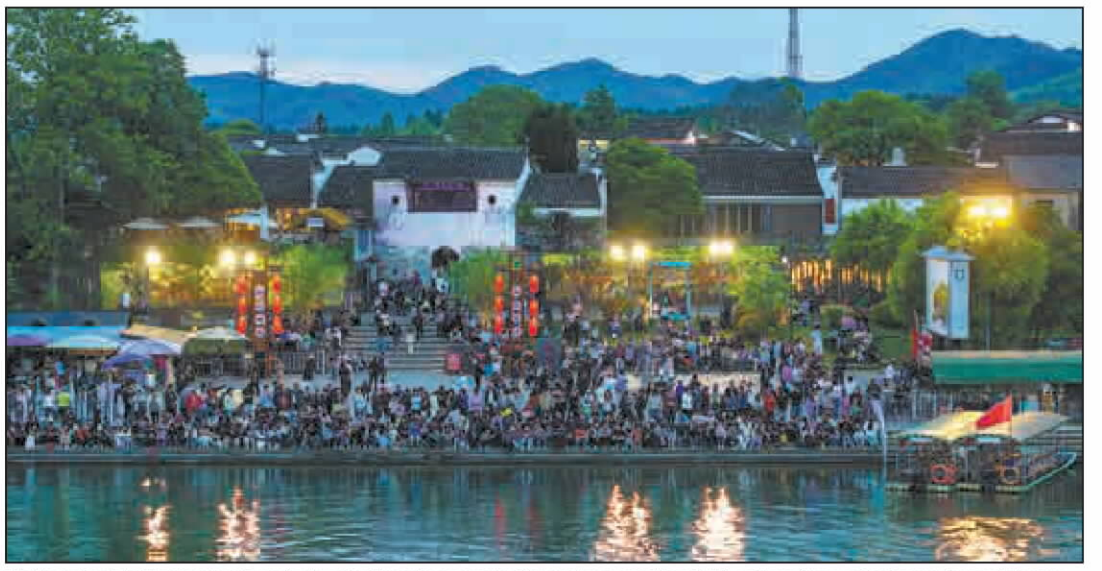
On the evening of April 15, He went to look for the dog but couldn't find it. He went back the next day but couldn't see Chief Huang.

"We wait for passengers at the station every day. Chief Huang quietly keeps us company. Over time, it has become like family to us," said Fan Bin, a taxi driver.

"Seeing it there each day gives us peace of mind; if we don't see it for one day, everyone starts asking each other about it," said Fan.

The accident

On April 17, Wang received a message online asking for help: a yellow dog near the Xuancheng Railway Station had been hit by a car and was unable to move, eat or drink.



Visitors flock to Taohuatan Scenic Area in Jingxian county, Xuancheng, on May 3. The city witnessed a boom in tourist numbers during the May Day holiday this year. ZHAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"On April 18, I arrived at the station and was surprised by the scene," said Wang.

On the station square, a row of taxis was parked beside a traffic island covered in green shrubs. Dozens of drivers had gathered, not waiting for passengers, but anxiously discussing the little yellow dog curled up in front of them.

At one point, Fan took out a stack of cash and a handwritten donation list. The list had no names, only a series of license plate numbers and donation amounts varying from 20 yuan ($2.94) to 1,000 yuan ($147.10).

Several days earlier, the dog had been hit by a passing vehicle. After the taxi drivers found it, they took it to a pet hospital and were told it needed immediate surgery, costing more than 10,000 yuan.

"(It had) three fractures in the front and hind limbs. The right hind leg was the most severely injured, with bone dislocation requiring immediate surgery, or it would face amputation or even death," said taxi driver Zhang Xinming.

One of the initiators of the donations, Zhang personally gave 1,000 yuan. His monthly income from operating a taxi is about 3,000 yuan.

In the taxi waiting area at the west square of the railway station, two pieces of paper were eventually posted on the bulletin board, recording total donations of more than 4,000 yuan by 48 taxi drivers and eight generous individuals.

"Despite these donations, it was still not enough for the treatment, so after a simple anti-inflammatory treatment, we took the yellow dog back to the train station and continued to find ways to help," Zhang said.

The dog was in so much pain that it wouldn't eat or drink. The drivers were afraid it would be hit by another car, so they moved it into the shrubbery.



Taxi driver He Wei displays his handmade keychain and fridge magnet souvenirs dedicated to Chief Huang. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Deeply moved

Wang had contracted pneumonia and was worried that sudden coughing might stress the yellow dog, so he asked a friend to remove the dog from the shrubs. He recorded the entire rescue with his phone camera and posted it online.

Wang and his friend took the dog to another animal hospital — Xuancheng Chongfuxin Pet Hospital — with a group of taxi drivers following closely behind.

Because there were too many people on-site, they finally selected four driver representatives to enter the hospital.

Upon learning about the donations raised by the taxi drivers, hospital director Zhu Jun was deeply moved and decided to do everything possible to treat the dog.

"We have been in pet medical care for many years, and this is the first time we have seen so many taxi drivers spontaneously raise money and wait outside the hospital for a stray dog," Zhu said.

The hospital decided not to charge more than 4,000 yuan for the operation. The subsequent treatment and recovery costs were all covered by the hospital.

On April 20, after two days of being treated with anti-inflammatories, Zhu and his colleague performed orthopedic surgery on Chief Huang. They successfully repaired three fractures and implanted an artificial ligament in the severely injured right hind leg.

After the surgery, the drivers left the hospital.

"In the following days, we drivers took turns visiting the hospital, bringing Chief Huang's favorite food, and quietly staying by her side, afraid she would feel lonely," Zhang said.

Spreading kindness

Chief Huang is still recuperating in the hospital, but her popularity has rocketed. Many people have not seen her online again.

He Wei has used his design expertise to make refrigerator magnets, key chains, and ornaments with images of the dog at his own expense. Initially, he gave them away for free to local taxi drivers and tourists who showed concern for the dog. But as more people asked for the merchandise, he started selling them at cost.

During the May Day holiday, many people came to Xuancheng and chose taxis as their preferred mode of transportation.

"A young passenger said he was touched by the story of this city. When he reached his destination, he was supposed to pay 13 yuan, but he quietly paid 20 yuan when getting out. When I reminded him, he ran off with his suitcase," said Fan.

The drivers said business during this year's May Day holiday was much busier than last year. It is roughly a three-hour drive from Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing, and its proximity makes it ideal for micro vacations.

To show their appreciation to local taxi drivers, some scenic spots offered them and their families free admission during the holidays.

Tourists who took taxis to scenic spots like Jingting Mountain and Shibawan Scenic Area were allowed to enter for free with a taxi receipt from the same day.

A number of restaurants and hotels offered discounts or reimbursed tourists' taxi fares. At the local Longquan Cave Scenic Area, taxi passengers had their taxi fare deducted from the ticket price.

From April 30 to May 5, Xuancheng Railway Station averaged 21,000 passengers per day, an increase of nearly 5 percent year-on-year.

The Xuancheng City Planning Museum received a total of 19,701 visitors from May 1 to May 5, with a single-day peak of 4,946, setting a new holiday record.

Serious considerations

Wang continues to rescue stray dogs almost every day. He said he did not intend to produce videos updating Chief Huang's condition, but is responding to enthusiastic requests from his followers about the dog's well-being.

"My original intention was to rescue stray animals, not to chase fame. The fame from Chief Huang's story belongs to our city," said Wang.

The dog's celebrity status has also posed some tough questions for the taxi drivers who love her so much — the chief one being someone's proposal to adopt her and their reluctance to part with the animal.

"She has been with us for so long, like family," Zhang said.

His life story is one of struggle and change. He was once a teacher, later worked for a State-owned enterprise, and after the enterprise went bankrupt, became a taxi driver.

"Adoption is possible, but the adopter must guarantee to treat Chief Huang well for her whole life," Zhang said.

Wang believes that if people want Chief Huang to return to the railway station, they should complete the adoption procedures, obtain a dog license, and comply with regulations.

Meanwhile, some government insiders revealed that after the May Day holiday, cultural and tourism proposals related to Chief Huang's fame had been stopped due to concerns about her welfare and overall stray dog management.

Some netizens have suggested the city should capitalize on Chief Huang's fame. "This is more effective than however many advertisements Xuancheng's cultural and tourism department could run. Who could resist such a warm city?" wrote one.

Another said: "Put Chief Huang's logo on the cars of these kindhearted drivers. From now on, choose them when you need a ride!"

Wang said there is a deeper issue to be addressed in the management of the city's stray animals. According to the Xuancheng government's dog management regulations, urban management departments are responsible for supervising and managing dog shelters and capturing stray dogs.

Stray cats and dogs caught by city officers should be neutered and then placed in appropriate institutions, such as stray animal placement centers cooperating with the government, to reduce the explosive growth of stray cats and dogs caused by uncontrolled breeding, Wang said, adding the government should establish public pet hospitals.

"In fact, the proliferation of stray cats and dogs largely stems from abandonment," Wang said, adding that the government should impose a stricter ban on abandoning domestic cats and dogs and raise the threshold for pet ownership as fundamental solutions to the problem.

Wen Qin of Anhui Daily contributed to this story.

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TOP NEWS

Cargo vessel to help advance space research

Tianzhou 10 delivers experimental supplies, equipment to country's Tiangong orbital post

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China launched on Monday the Tianzhou 10 cargo spacecraft to deliver scientific equipment and experimental supplies, including artificial human embryos, ultra-thin solar cells and a greenhouse gas monitor, to its orbiting Tiangong space station.

A Long March 7 rocket, carrying the cargo vessel, blasted off at 8:14 am from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan province, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

After a short flight, the Tianzhou 10 spacecraft separated from the carrier rocket and entered its designated orbit. At 1:11 pm, the cargo vessel docked with the Tianhe core module of the Tiangong space station, paving the way for Shenzhou XXI astronauts to enter the vessel and transfer payloads as scheduled.

Later in the day, Shenzhou XXI mission commander Senior Colonel Zhang Lu, spaceflight engineer Major Wu Fei and payload specialist Zhang Hongzhang entered the cargo vessel and began arranging the transfer of the payloads.

Tianzhou 10, which is the 20th spaceship and the ninth cargo vessel to dock at the space station, has delivered nearly 6.2 metric tons of daily necessities, scientific equipment and experimental supplies, as well as about 700 kilograms of fuel. The cargo includes a spacewalk suit, a treadmill and many instruments for scientific experiments and technological tests.

Mission planners at the China Academy of Space Technology said the Tianzhou 10 is designed to dock with the Tiangong space station for a whole year, making it the longest cargo mission in the history of China's space industry.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization, which is responsible for scientific missions on board China's space station, the Tianzhou 10 has delivered 67 sets of devices, experimental expendables, samples and spare materials, which have a combined weight of 768.2 kg and will be used to conduct 41 experiments.

The experimental cargo includes zebrafish embryos, mouse embryos and stem cell-derived artificial human embryos. The human embryos, although not true life forms, will help simulate the earliest stages of human development, according to reports from China Central Television.

The experiments in orbit will help establish a space-based embryo research system spanning lower vertebrates to higher mammals. The biological research will provide insights into how the space environment, specifically microgravity and radiation, affects reproduction and development, laying the foundation for long-term human habitation in space.

Among the payloads are flexible solar cells. With a thickness of just 80 micrometers — roughly the same as a human hair — these cells can be folded and rolled, allowing a greater number of solar panels to be packed into a given amount of space. Subjecting this new technology to the extreme space environment will help verify and improve its long-term power-generation stability, paving the way for supplying energy to China's large-scale satellite internet constellations.

The greenhouse gas monitor, developed under the leadership of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, is designed to track concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane across global middle and low latitudes.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Activist returns



Spanish activist Saif Abu Keshek, from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, is welcomed on Sunday upon arrival at Barcelona airport after being released by Israeli authorities. Israeli forces had intercepted the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters off Greece last week and detained Abu Keshek and Brazilian activist Thiago Avila, accusing them of having links with a "terrorist group". MANAURE QUINTERO / AFP

Innovation: Nation plays essential role in sharing technological achievements

From page 1

This is why China has invested heavily in research institutions, national laboratories, high-tech zones and innovation clusters that bring together industry, academia and government. These systems support a continuous cycle of research, invention, industrialization and global expansion.

This shift indicates a deeper transformation in which innovation is not merely a sector, but the main engine of national power.

One of the most striking examples of China's technological progress is its rapid advancement in artificial intelligence and intelligent computing. China is developing cutting-edge platforms in machine learning, deep neural networks, autonomous systems and supercomputing. Its research institutes and companies are building intelligent algorithms that can manage transportation systems, financial operations, healthcare diagnostics, smart cities and governance services. This progress demonstrates China's ability to integrate science with practical solutions for society, while AI is becoming a strategic resource for China's overall development and is also transforming global industry and digital ecosystems.

Furthermore, China is among the world's leaders in new-generation communication technologies.

After setting global standards in the expansion of fifth-generation networks, China is now moving forward with research and trials for sixth-generation systems. These technologies promise extremely fast communication speeds, stronger internet connectivity, and new possibilities in virtual reality, smart manufacturing and remote sensing. China continues to invest in satellite-based internet services, optical fiber networks and advanced communication equipment. These achievements enable the country to play an important role in building future global information infrastructure, and nations around the world are deepening cooperation with China to build reliable and affordable digital networks.

High-tech manufacturing is another area in which China is achieving robust growth. The country has become an important global hub for robotics, drones, electric vehicles, battery production, new materials, biotechnology and precision engineering. China's industrial transformation is supported by advanced equipment, skilled human capital and efficient supply chains. This new industrial system strengthens national competitiveness and enhances the country's ability to contribute to global markets. In addition, the progress in electric vehicles and battery technology is helping reshape the global transportation landscape, as Chinese innovation has made clean and smart vehicles more accessible to consumers across the developing world.

China's focus on green technology further strengthens its technological edge and global cooperative influence. The country is the world's largest producer of solar energy equipment, wind turbines and battery storage systems. It has built massive renewable energy bases, modern power grids and eco-friendly industries that reduce carbon emissions, and the country's approach demonstrates that technological advancement and environmental responsibility can progress together.

Through green innovation, China is offering solutions to global climate challenges and supporting the transition toward cleaner and more sustainable economies. This progress is of great significance for developing nations that need affordable and reliable green technology for long-term growth.

What's more, China also plays an essential role in sharing technological achievements and innovative experience with developing countries. Through cooperation projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Chinese companies provide modern technology, training and digital tools for nations' development. The affordable cost of Chinese equipment makes advanced technology accessible to countries that would otherwise struggle to adopt modern systems.

China's approach is based on partnership, respect and shared benefits. It helps build digital infrastructure, renewable energy capacity, industrial systems and modern knowledge-based economies. These contributions demonstrate the country's belief in global common progress and its willingness to support an inclusive technological ecosystem.

For Pakistan, China's growing strength in technology presents major opportunities.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is not only about roads and energy projects. It is evolving into a powerful platform for digital transformation, AI cooperation, smart agriculture, advanced manufacturing and innovation-based industries. Pakistan can benefit from China's experience in financial technology, e-commerce, telecommunications, climate-smart agriculture, digital governance and high-tech manufacturing.

The next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide opportunities for technology transfer, research partnerships, joint innovation centers and capacity building programs. With China's support, Pakistan can build a modern economy that is competitive, sustainable and deeply connected to global technological trends.

China's advancements in AI can be particularly valuable for Pakistan. Intelligent systems can support urban planning, financial regulation, healthcare delivery and agricultural management. Cooperation in robotics, digital education and high-tech manufacturing can generate employment and modernize industrial capacity. Furthermore, China's experience in digital governance and smart cities can help Pakistan improve public services and strengthen transparency. These areas of partnership show that China's technological rise is not only beneficial for its own future, but also contributes to the progress of friendly countries that share a vision for common development.

China's global technological impact extends beyond products and industries. It represents a broader philosophy of cooperation, peaceful development and shared prosperity. The country encourages other nations to work together in scientific research, environmental protection, digital trade and modern industrial systems. The idea of a community with a shared future for humanity guides China's approach to technology and development. It promotes unity, fairness and mutual respect in international relations, and this is a refreshing alternative to competition-based narratives that create divisions and hinder global progress.

The author is executive editor of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad media group. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Hands-on experience



Children try their hand at Chinese-style painting on Sunday in Rome, Italy, during a traditional Chinese cultural experience event. Visitors not only enjoyed performances such as Chinese folk music and lion dance, but also participated in activities including calligraphy, paper-cutting and tea art. WANG KAIYAN / XINHUA

Visit: Risk management in AI could figure in talks

From page 1

Gupta said that artificial intelligence has emerged as a significant area where both nations recognize a mutual interest in risk management.

Scott Kennedy, senior advisor and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the US, said during a news briefing earlier that the current trajectory reflects a period of relative confidence. He said that as the two sides prepare for senior-level dialogues, "China has the right to be confident that they are doing very well bilaterally".

While both sides are seeking to expand cooperation, managing differences and sensitive issues — particularly the Taiwan question — is also expected to be high on the agenda.

During a phone conversation with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in late April, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the Taiwan question concerns China's core interests and remains the biggest risk in China-US relations.

Bonny Lin, director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that stability in the overall relationship is predicated on mutual understanding. Referring to official positions, Lin pointed out that fulfilling international obligations on this question is viewed as "a necessary prerequisite for the stable, sound and sustainable development of China-US relations".

Contact the writers at zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

Festival: People don't come just for music

From page 1

Over the course of the summer, the Strawberry Music Festival will make stops in a number of Chinese cities, including Taiyuan in Shanxi province on May 23 and 24, Changsha in Hunan province on May 30 and 31, and Harbin in Heilongjiang province on June 13 and 14.

The Strawberry Music Festival is just one of several music events that define China's summer landscape. Across the country, festivals have developed distinct identities. The Youth Music Festival, held in Dezhou and Weifang, both in Shandong province, focuses on rock bands, attracting fans who mosh and trade stickers. The Northward Music Festival in Changchun, Jilin province, highlights hip-hop and rap, providing a platform for underground artists to reach new audiences.

For attendees, these festivals are about more than music. Market stalls sell band merchandise, pop-up art projects invite participation, and picnic blankets and sofas create informal social spaces.

Shen Yue, vice-president of Modern Sky, the company behind the Strawberry Music Festival, described the event as a cultural space for a new generation.

"People come not just for music, but to meet friends, experiment with fashion and express themselves," he said. "For many young people, festivals are a temporary escape — a place to feel free, to belong and to create."

China, US jointly cut off drug trafficking corridor

By YANG ZEKUN
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

Narcotics control authorities from China and the United States recently cracked a cross-border drug smuggling and trafficking case, arresting five suspects and cutting off a transnational drug route, China's Ministry of Public Security said on Monday.

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Views, **page 7**

In early April, the ministry's Narcotics Control Bureau and the US Drug Enforcement Administration jointly handled the case, according to a statement issued by the ministry. Coordinated operations were carried out in Liaoning and Guangdong provinces in China, as well as the states of Florida and Nevada in the US. Five suspects — two Chinese nationals and three US nationals — were arrested.

The ministry said the operations successfully dismantled a drug smuggling and trafficking route covering China and the US. It added that the case marked another major result of practical cooperation between Chinese and US antidrug agencies, demonstrating the two countries' shared determination to control drug-related crimes.

The China-US antidrug cooperation has continued to advance in recent years through intelligence sharing, joint case handling, technical exchanges and tighter control of narcotics-related substances and chemicals.

On Jan 30, 2024, the two nations launched the China-US Counternarcotics Working Group in Beijing, identifying priority areas for cooperation. On July 31 the same year, a Chinese interdepartmental delegation visited the US for the first senior officials' meeting of the working group, helping to build mutual trust and advance practical cooperation. Since 2024, China's Narcotics Control Bureau has maintained routine hotline contact and regular exchanges with US antidrug agencies. The two sides have exchanged more than 100 intelligence leads.

Technical cooperation has also deepened. Since 2024, China and the US have held several meetings of antidrug technical experts and established a scientist exchange mechanism. Experts from Chinese and US agencies have shared drug-testing experience and discussed ways to strengthen technical support for addressing the fentanyl issue.

In February, cross-departmental antidrug delegations from the two countries held the 11th China-US antidrug intelligence exchange meeting in the US. They discussed issues including the global and regional drug situation, removal of online illicit information, joint case handling, chemical control, and anti-money laundering efforts related to drug crimes.

Joint case handling has produced concrete results. In February 2025, Chinese antidrug authorities and the China Coast Guard, acting on tips from the DEA, seized more than 4,900 kilograms of methamphetamine and arrested seven suspects in waters near Huangyan Island in the South China Sea.

China has also strengthened control of narcotics-related substances and precursor chemicals. In July 2024, the nation placed 46 new psychoactive substances under control, while in September that year, it added seven chemicals, including three fentanyl precursors, to its controlled precursor chemicals list.

In November 2025, China adjusted its export management catalog for precursor chemicals to specific countries and regions, adding the US, Mexico and Canada to the list and placing 13 additional precursor chemicals under export controls for those destinations.

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GLOBAL LENS







Left: Workers who helped clean up contamination from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster hold flowers before placing them on a monument to their fallen comrades near the plant in Ukraine on April 21.
Right from top: Volodymyr Vechirko (center), 62, one of the workers sent to clean up contamination from the Chernobyl plant, pours vodka during lunch near the plant on April 21.
Vechirko rides in a bus with fellow workers for a visit to the region ahead of the 40th anniversary of the disaster in Chernobyl on April 21. PHOTOS BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA / AP

SCARRED FOR LIFE

40 years on, Chernobyl still questions humanity on how to safely harness nuclear energy

Radioactive Contamination! No Entry!

The warning sign at the entrance to the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Belarus' southern Gomel Region, near the Ukrainian border, is impossible to miss.

Its bold lettering and stark trefoil radiation symbol seem to fix their gaze on every visitor, discouraging any attempt to proceed.

On April 26, 1986, Reactor No. 4 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the former Soviet republic of Ukraine exploded, releasing more than 8 metric tons of highly radioactive material. Over 60,000 square kilometers of land were contaminated, and more than 3.2 million people were affected to varying degrees. It remains the most severe nuclear disaster in the history of civilian nuclear energy.

Belarus, itself a former Soviet republic at the time, suffered the brunt of the nuclear fallout.

As the iron gates of the exclusion zone at the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Belarus creaked open, the vehicle moved slowly along a narrow village road, as if crossing a boundary between present and past.

The road was scarred by years of neglect. Fallen trees lay scattered through the forest, while nameless wildflowers bloomed quietly in the marshes. The hum of the tires felt intrusive, breaking the heavy, almost unnatural silence.

"This was a school — a place where visitors now come to take photos," said Alexey Kazakov, head of the reserve's information department. After the disaster, then-Soviet authorities evacuated all settlements within a 30-kilometer radius of the plant, including the village of Dronki, where the school once stood.

Inside the abandoned classrooms, shattered glass and crumbling plaster covered the floor. Yellowed textbooks lay open to lessons frozen in time, and dusty backpacks still waited for children who never returned. A faded slogan — "Long Live May Day!" — hung on the wall, a haunting reminder that the joy of the 1986 holiday was abruptly stolen by radiation. For residents in the contaminated zone, life was permanently divided into "before" and "after".



An abandoned classroom in the village of Dronki in the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Gomel Region, Belarus, on April 22. HENADZ ZHINKOV / XINHUA

As the vehicle moved deeper into the exclusion zone, the radiation monitor's reading climbed, and its beeping warning grew increasingly urgent.

"There is no completely safe place here; we are always exposed to some radiation," explained Maxim Kudin, deputy director of the reserve. However, because tourist areas are grass-covered and relatively dust-free, short visits carry limited risk.

Revisiting history

To this day, what lingers most deeply from this disaster are the people who came to help back then. Four years after the disaster, 600,000 people joined the dangerous cleanup.

Helicopters hovered above the exposed radioactive core, dropping sand and other materials to smother the fire. Workers washed radioactive dust from buildings and roads, buried poisoned machinery, cleared forests and hunted animals to slow the spread of radiation.

A group of the workers who live in Ukraine's Poltava region returned ahead of the 40th anniversary of the accident for a one-day trip to Chernobyl.

Volodymyr Vechirko, 62, was sent to Chernobyl in summer 1986 to clear away topsoil, clean buildings and make the other still-functioning reactors on the site safe. He has been ill for much of his life, which he attributes to working at the disaster site, including chronic dizziness, weakness and frequent pain.

Because of his poor health, he said, he lost touch with colleagues. "Being back here now, the emotions are overwhelming," he said. "It's incredibly sad to compare what this place was to what it is now."

Oleksii Harbuz, 72, a medical officer during that time, was close to the human costs of the disaster. Returning for the first time in decades, he recalled colleagues who have since died and the bonds formed among survivors.

"This 40th anniversary represents both a deep tragedy and a vital chance to reunite with my brothers-in-arms," he said. "So many of our colleagues have passed away over the years, but those of us remaining hold on."

Scientific research

Since 2018, about 5,000 people have visited the reserve. Scientists accompany visitors, helping them understand the radiation levels, risks, and the gradual recovery of the ecosystem.

Over four decades, Belarus has worked to mitigate the disaster's impact. By 2025, it had implemented multiple national programs, significantly reducing contamination; about half of the affected agricultural land had been restored.

Advances in research have also improved detection and monitoring of radioactive elements, with the reserve's laboratories ranked among the world's best in this regard.

Experimental economic activities — including horse breeding, forestry, and beekeeping — have been introduced into less-contaminated areas. Researchers study how radioactive elements transfer through ecosystems while ensuring strict safety controls. According to Kudin, it is possible to produce goods that meet national safety standards under controlled conditions. The goal is to develop models for safe economic use of affected land.

In the reserve, horses graze calmly, and apiaries produce several tons of honey each year, "just as sweet as anywhere else", a beekeeper noted.

From a fire watchtower, the distant outline of the Chernobyl plant is visible, its reactor encased beneath a gleaming arch. Around it, forests have returned to life.

Yet the scars of the disaster remain. Environmental healing could take centuries, and the question of how to harness nuclear energy safely continues to challenge humanity.

XINHUA—AGENCIES







From top: Stanislav Tolumnyi, 65, a firefighter who worked to decontaminate areas near the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant after the 1986 disaster, poses for a photo in a nearby abandoned town, on April 21. Volodymyr Vechirko, 62, also one of the workers, poses for a photo near the plant on April 21. Workers who were sent to clean up contamination after the disaster pass through a radiation inspection point during a gathering on April 21. PHOTOS BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA / AP







From left: A worker tests samples on April 22 in the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve, a radioecological reserve in Belarus' southern Gomel Region created to enclose the territory most affected by radioactive fallout from Chernobyl plant. A radiation monitor in the reserve on April 22. Warning signs at the entrance to the reserve on April 22. PHOTOS BY HENADZ ZHINKOV / XINHUA

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WORLD

US dismisses 'unacceptable' Iran demands

Uncertainty persists, tensions deepen as Washington rejects Tehran's terms

By **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

Washington has dismissed Tehran's response to its peace proposal as "totally unacceptable", likely complicating talks to end a war that has significantly ruptured the global economy and prompting a rethink on regional security.

"I don't like it — totally unacceptable," United States President Donald Trump said in a social media post on Sunday, without giving further details.

Iran's state broadcaster IRIB reported that the response included the necessity for the US to pay war damages to Iran, the recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, the lifting of US sanctions, and the release of Iran's blocked assets by the US.

While more details have yet to emerge from the US side, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has outlined three of Iran's postwar strategic options, according to the Mehr News Agency.

Pezeshkian said Iran faces three distinct paths — entering negotiations with dignity and strength to claim Iranian rights; remaining in a state of neither war nor peace; or continuing on a path of conflict and confrontation.

He framed Iran's openness to diplomacy not as a concession but as a calculated posture, citing the words of Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balaghah* — if an enemy calls for peace, one should not reject it, but equally should never become complacent, optimistic or trusting of that enemy after peace is established.

Nahj al-Balaghah is a collection of sermons, letters and sayings attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Rashidun caliph and the first Shia imam.

"The rational and logical preference, grounded in national interest, is for the victory secured by the Armed Forces on the battlefield to be completed in the diplomatic arena, with the rights of the Iranian people established from a position of dignity and authority," Pezeshkian said.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei defended Tehran's proposals as "reasonable and generous" and blamed the US for insisting on "unreasonable demands", Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported.

Baghaei told reporters that Iran uses both military and diplomatic tools as needed to secure its national interests, without seeking others' approval, adding that the country has participated in the diplomatic processes "with good faith and reason".

The US must prove its seriousness, he said, highlighting its record of breaking commitments. He cited the 2018 withdrawal from the nuclear deal and the US attacks over the past year, while negotiations were underway, Mehr reported.

"We fight whenever necessary and we use the weapon of diplomacy whenever we deem it right," Baghaei said.

War 'not over'

While the US and Iran iron out their differences in reaching a deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Iran war "is not over" in an interview with US media CBS aired on Sunday.

"It's not over, because there's still nuclear material — enriched uranium — that has to be taken out of Iran. There are still enrichment sites that have to be dismantled," he said.

When asked how the uranium could be removed, Netanyahu suggested, "You go in, and you take it out."

Meanwhile, Seoul condemned an attack on a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz, saying it plans to respond once the source of the attack is identified, Reuters reported.

Namu, the vessel operated by the shipper HMM, was not in violation of any rules in effect at the time in the waters off the United Arab Emirates, according to the report.

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

Making heads turn



Participants in the World Hat Walk — an international event held in up to 60 cities worldwide to promote creative headwear — pose for photographs in Bucharest, Romania, on Sunday. VADIM GHIRDA / AP

Beijing leads way in improving entry policies as visa-free travel burgeons

By **LIU JIANQIAO** and **GUO JIATONG**

China continues to expand its visa-free travel options, resulting in a growing number of foreign arrivals.

Immigration authorities across the country are rolling out ways to streamline the customs process and accommodate the increase in travelers, aiming to make a more convenient experience.

During the May Day holiday, border inspection authorities nationwide processed more than 11 million cross-border trips by Chinese and foreign nationals, averaging 2.26 million trips a day, up 3.5 percent year-on-year, according to the National Immigration Administration.

China currently grants unilateral visa-free entry to citizens of 50 countries, has mutual visa-free arrangements with 29 countries, and has expanded its 240-hour visa-free transit policy to travelers from 55 countries.

From May 1 to 5, Beijing's ports of entry recorded 111,000 inbound and outbound trips by foreign nationals, up 20.5 percent year-on-year, according to official data.

Among them, more than 37,000 people entered China under visa-free policies or the 240-hour temporary entry permit arrangement, accounting for 74.7 percent of all foreign arrivals during the period, a year-on-year increase of 50.2 percent.

In response, the Beijing General Station of Immigration Inspection has introduced a series of measures to ensure efficient and orderly entry.

"To actively cope with the surge in inbound and outbound passenger flows during the May Day holiday, we've continued to optimize our service measures to ensure smooth and efficient clearance for all travelers," said Zhao Kun, captain of a patrol unit at the station.

"By monitoring passenger flows at ports of entry in real time and dynamically adjusting inspection channels in response to traffic volumes, we ensure staff resources are allocated in line with passenger demand," she said.

"During peak hours, inspection channels are opened in advance and operated at full capacity to reduce passenger wait times."

Fast-track inspection channels operate around the clock and provide on-site registration services, enabling eligible travelers to complete clearance more efficiently, she said.

"We are also fully implementing facilitation measures, such as the 24-hour visa-free transit policy and online entry card processing for foreign nationals, while optimizing the one-stop processing system for temporary entry permits and immigration clearance procedures to further improve efficiency for travelers," she added.

Providing help

The station has also strengthened passenger guidance and traffic management outside inspection counters, while promptly assisting elderly passengers, children and other travelers in need.

"Multilingual service teams have been fully mobilized to provide on-site policy consultation services for international travelers, further enhancing the overall clearance experience," Zhao said.

Phuc Huynh Thien, a visitor from Vietnam, said the convenient policies provided "a perfect start to my trip to Beijing".

"The airport's multilingual services also offered clear policy guidance, making the customs clearance process even smoother," he said.

Popova, a Russian tourist who only provided her surname, was visiting China for the first time with her child. She said police officers helped them throughout the process, from arrival to customs clearance.

"I didn't expect everything to go so smoothly, and my child is very happy," she said. "This experience of clearance has made me even more excited about the rest of our trip in China."

International flights to Beijing's airports continue to grow since the start of the summer-autumn schedule.

Beijing Capital International Airport has gradually increased flight frequencies on more than a dozen European routes, including Brussels, Istanbul and Dublin, while further enhancing connectivity across Asia.

Meanwhile, Beijing Daxing International Airport plans to operate routes to 44 international and regional destinations, aiming to better meet the diverse demands of travelers.

An Australian athlete said he was in the country to compete in a diving event.

"I've been to China before under the visa-free policy, and the entry process was very smooth," he said. "Policies like this can attract more international visitors to China."

He added that he was particularly interested in experiencing Chinese culture. "The culture here is quite different from Australia's, and that's something I really enjoy because I like experiencing new things," he said.

Contact the writers at liujianqiao@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
See more by scanning the code.

PM Starmer vows to stay on after loss in local polls

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer has vowed to stay in office and take action on "the big challenges facing the country" after his Labour Party suffered huge losses in last week's local elections, with voter unhappiness at his leadership being identified as a vital factor.

Local elections have no effect on the makeup of the national parliament, but the results, coming after nearly two years of Labour rule, are a clear expression of nationwide sentiment toward the central government.

Across England, hundreds of Labour councilors lost their seats. In elections for the Welsh Parliament, known as the Senedd, the party suffered its worst-ever results. In Scotland too, it performed poorly, prompting Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar to repeat his call, first made in February, for Starmer to step down.

In a speech to Labour members of parliament on Monday, Starmer acknowledged that he had "doubters" and "some people are frustrated with me ... I know I need to prove them wrong and I will".

The government would "face up to the big challenges" and "make the big arguments" to try and persuade voters that theirs was the best way forward, he said.

He also picked out the populist policies of the left-wing Green Party and right-wing Reform UK, which enjoyed significant success in the local elections, saying: "We're battling the despair on which they (play), despair that they exploit and amplify. And so analysis matters, argument matters, but so too does emotion ... people need hope."

One Labour member, Paula Barker, has said she will challenge Starmer unless he steps aside. She told *BBC Breakfast* that the UK "had stopped listening" to him and that he was "a very nice man but he's an awful politician".

"It's becoming increasingly clear that our Labour government can no longer succeed if we have Keir at the helm," she said.

Barker has never held a senior position, so her challenge would be symbolic rather than meaningful, but if she goes through with her threat, it will give Starmer's opponents an opportunity to make their position clear.

The person regarded as his most serious rival, Andy Burnham, who stood as a candidate to be Labour leader in 2015, is currently not a member of parliament, having quit Westminster in 2017 to seek election as mayor of Greater Manchester, a post in which he is serving his third term.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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Pavilion bridges past, future at Venice event

VENICE, Italy — The China pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, is drawing crowds with a presentation that bridges the past and the future.

Since joining the Venice Biennale in 2003, the China pavilion has become an important platform for Chinese contemporary art to meet an international audience.

Themed "Dream Stream", the pavilion this year tries to deliver a sense of crossing time and space. The theme was named after *Dream Stream Essays*, an encyclopedia written by Shen Kuo in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

The exhibition combines calligraphy, video, digital art, multimedia installations and a robot display to present Chinese tradition in new forms.

Artist Xu Jiang said Dream Stream includes elements from the treasure house of Chinese culture, which are presented through imagination.

One of the highlights was a robot that writes the Chinese characters of Dream Stream with a writing brush. Its mechanical arm guides the brush with rhythm across the paper, showing the force and beauty of Chinese calligraphy, with visitors gathering around to take pictures.

Italian visitor Vanna Rossetti said Chinese calligraphy moved her deeply, calling it "a beautiful form of communication".

Matteo Salvini, Italian deputy prime minister and minister of infrastructure and transport, said he admires Chinese culture and praised the exhibition as "wonderful", noting that it showed both China's historical culture and its vision for the future.

After receiving the robot-written calligraphy, he said he liked the fragrance of Chinese ink and would place it in his office.

Laura Fincato, former Italian deputy foreign minister, said the China pavilion reflects openness, dialogue and connection, as well as the creativity of the artists.

Art and culture remain important forces in building bridges when the world needs more communication and mutual understanding, she said.

Li Xiaoyong, charge d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in Italy, said China and Italy, both ancient civilizations, will continue to deepen exchanges in art, cultural heritage protection and other fields, strengthening people-to-people exchanges to develop bilateral ties.



A robot writes a character at the Chinese pavilion during the pre-opening of the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, on Wednesday. MARCO BERTORELLO / AFP

The China pavilion's exhibition will run through November.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Head-of-state diplomacy can continue to chart stabilizing course for Sino-US ties

The upcoming visit by US President Donald Trump, scheduled from Wednesday to Friday, will be the first to China by a US president in nine years. Such top-level face-to-face exchanges are essential for the stable development of bilateral ties.

Over recent years, head-of-state diplomacy has played an irreplaceable role in guiding the development of China-US relations. The multiple telephone conversations between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump, and their meeting in Busan, the Republic of Korea, in October last year provided strategic direction for the management of differences and the expansion of cooperation.

Under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, the two sides have carried out six rounds of economic and trade consultations since May 2025 — in Geneva, London, Stockholm, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur and Paris — and are holding the seventh round in Seoul from Tuesday to Wednesday immediately ahead of the summit meeting.

The frequency of the trade discussions reflects both sides' recognition that coordination on economic and trade issues between the world's two largest economies remains among the most important stabilizing factors in bilateral relations. Since economic and trade frictions escalated last year, maintaining close communication has become essential to prevent the broader relationship from being damaged by negative spillover effects.

It is noteworthy that the United States imposed sanctions on three Chinese companies on Friday, accusing them of "assisting Iran". China firmly opposes such illegal unilateral sanctions that lack a basis in international law and it will protect the companies' legitimate rights, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday.

The top priority should be to make every effort to prevent the resumption of hostilities in the Middle East, rather than exploiting the conflict to smear or entangle other nations, Guo added.

China and the US have common interests in promoting early and proper resolutions of hotspot issues, which is in line with the world's expectations.

They also have common interests in making joint efforts to reduce trade and investment barriers to each other in some sectors, and exploring more stable and institutionalized frameworks for long-term cooperation.

Such endeavors could potentially pave the way for broader tariff suspensions, more confidence-building measures in some key fields and reciprocal reductions of restrictive policies, so as to help stabilize supply chains.

It should be borne in mind that pragmatic cooperation between China and the US has continued in other areas despite the existing differences between them. A joint counternarcotics operation carried out by related departments of the two sides in early April underscored the shared determination of both countries to combat drug-related crimes and safeguard public security through practical cooperation.

What matters is not that the two major countries have differences and their respective core concerns — that is only natural — but rather how they perceive and approach those differences, and how they show due concern to each other's core concerns. Among them, the Taiwan question is the most important and sensitive issue in China-US relations. The US should handle it with utmost prudence.

Stable China-US relations are not only in the interests of the two countries, but also vital to global peace, stability and development. The momentum with which the two sides maintain their exchanges and sustain their coordination on issues of common concern has sent a positive signal: dialogue and cooperation remain the mainstream aspiration on both sides of the Pacific.

As Guo said on Monday in reply to questions on Beijing's expectations for the upcoming visit by Trump, China stands ready to work with the US to expand cooperation and properly manage differences, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and reciprocity.

Confrontation does not serve the interests of either side. Guided by a commitment to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, China and the US can sustain their communication, expand the space for collaboration, and increase the areas where their interests converge.

Lai taking dead-end path at cost of Taiwan

The Democratic Progressive Party authorities of China's Taiwan region have been at the center of a heated debate over their proposed arms procurement bill. Initially seeking to allocate a staggering NT$1.25 trillion ($40 billion) for military spending, the DPP authorities' ambitions met with strong resistance from opposition parties and the public alike.

The passage on Friday of a revised bill, with the budget reduced to NT$780 billion, once again demonstrated that the "Taiwan independence" forces cannot ignore mainstream public opinion on the island.

Taiwan's taxpayers are still footing the bill for the gamble of the DPP's push for "Taiwan independence". There is growing anxiety within Taiwan society over the dire consequences of the DPP authorities' secessionist policies.

Lai Ching-te, the secessionist-minded head of the DPP authorities, has pledged to raise the island's security budget to 5 percent of GDP by 2030, describing the initiative as a "necessary investment" aimed at addressing "regional security challenges" and strengthening so-called "asymmetric warfare" capabilities.

Critics within Taiwan have rightly argued that Lai is attempting to justify his secessionist policies with lies falsely framing Taiwan as a "vulnerable" entity.

During a hearing of the Senate Committee on Armed Services last month, Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, bluntly stated, "It's not a chicken and the egg, because you're not going to get chicken or eggs if you starve the chicken." He urged Taiwan to pass its stalled defense budget as soon as possible to avoid starving the US military-industrial complex.

The DPP's planned military spending is akin to paying "protection fees" to the US at the cost of the island's education, healthcare and social welfare.

The DPP authorities are also actively aligning with Japan, aiming to leverage its support for their secessionist cause. Lai has frequently made shameless shows of reverence for symbols of the Japanese colonial era, even going so far as to kneel in gratitude before a statue of a de facto Japanese occupier during a public ceremony over the weekend.

The Lai authorities intentionally downplay the impact of Japanese colonial rule — it is estimated over 600,000 people in Taiwan lost their lives in the struggle against Japan's colonial rule and in the broader effort to restore the Taiwan region to China from 1895 to 1945 — to sever the island from its cultural and historical roots.

Lai portrayed Japanese invaders and colonizers as "saviors", when in fact they were killers and robbers. He also characterized US arms dealers as "protectors", though they are nothing more than exploiters.

Such words and deeds are evidence of the deceptive nature of the DPP authorities, whose diehard secessionist stance means the political foundation for Taiwan to participate in the World Health Assembly does not exist, as the spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

To uphold the one-China principle and defend the seriousness and authority of the relevant United Nations General Assembly and World Health Assembly resolutions, the Chinese mainland has decided not to agree to Taiwan's participation in this year's WHA as an observer.

Notably, to advance the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and enhance the kinship and well-being of compatriots across the Strait, the mainland has recently rolled out a package of 10 policies and measures — spanning infrastructure, travel, trade and culture.

The DPP authorities have been going to great lengths to smear the aforementioned policies and measures that serve the common interests of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Their actions are a blatant attempt to call black white.

Taiwan's future lies not in relying on external forces, but in advancing peaceful development and deepening dialogue and cooperation across the Taiwan Strait. That represents the rational path forward and the shared aspiration of compatriots on both sides of the Strait.

Any attempt by "Taiwan independence" forces to seek separatist agendas through foreign support is doomed to failure.

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Contact us at:

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 692 0900 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Restitution law recognition that respect begins at home

France's decision last week to simplify the restitution of cultural artifacts acquired through illicit appropriation is an admission that history leaves debts that must be honored.

The French Parliament's overwhelming approval of the legislation — 343 votes in favor and none against in the Sénat, following unanimous passage in the Assemblée Nationale — shows the country's willingness to reconcile itself with its past.

The importance of this law lies not only in what it permits, but in what it dismantles. For generations, France's doctrine of the "inalienability" of public collections functioned almost as a secular catechism of the republic. Once an object entered the national collection, it became virtually untouchable, requiring painstaking parliamentary intervention for every single restitution. The Louvre, Quai Branly and countless provincial museums became guardians not merely of art, but of imperial memory itself.

Now, for the first time, France has established a legal framework enabling the return of cultural objects acquired through looting, coercion or colonial expropriation between 1815 and 1972.

Across the West, debates over colonial history have grown increasingly polarized. The United Kingdom continues its endless evasions over the Parthenon Marbles and the Benin Bronzes. It is not surprising that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian expressed China's appreciation that France has stepped up to its responsibility in returning lost artifacts to their countries of origin, regarding the issue as an opportunity for dialogue and "mutual learning between civilizations".

These remarks point toward something deeper. Cultural restitution is not merely about objects. It is about the right of nations to tell their own stories through the artifacts that embody their memory.

Few episodes symbolize this more vividly than the destruction of the Old Summer Palace in Beijing in 1860 by Anglo-French Alliance Forces during the Second Opium War (1856-60). The looting of that palace, which is called Yuanmingyuan Park today, remains one of the traumas in modern Chinese historical consciousness.

In 1861, French writer Victor Hugo wrote a letter to his friend Captain Butler, one of the leaders of the Anglo-French forces, describing the looting of the Old Summer Palace as a crime against civilization, damning it as the act of "two bandits" — "One plundered, the other burned".

"The day will come," he wrote, "when France, once freed and cleansed, will return this plunder to China."

Although the sentence now reads like prophecy, the step toward its realization took more than one and a half centuries. And France is not now emptying its museums. The law excludes military objects and certain archaeological materials, and restitution cases will still require extensive review. Nor does this legislation erase the asymmetry of centuries of colonial extraction.

But symbols matter in diplomacy. What France has recognized is that cultural diplomacy cannot survive on nostalgia alone. A museum is not morally neutral simply because it is beautiful.

This is why French Senator Catherine Morin-Desailly captured the significance of the legislation when she said the law "opens a path where memory is no longer confiscated but shared, where the wounds of history become the foundations of a renewed dialogue between nations".

France at least understands something that many of the Western colonial powers still struggle to accept: that status comes not from the trappings of display but from respect.

And respect cannot be earned by displaying heirlooms stolen from others.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Social assistance upgraded to help more in need

Editor's note: *The country's new law on social assistance will come into effect on July 1. China.org.cn spoke to Yang Lixiong, a professor in the School of Labor and Human Resources at Renmin University of China, to gain insights into the new legislation. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Until now, social assistance in China was limited to those facing extreme hardship or qualifying for minimum living allowances. The new law expands coverage to include special hardship support for families close to qualifying for minimum living allowances and those facing difficulties in paying rigid expenditures, as well as other groups identified by local governments as needing assistance.

A significant change in the new law is the recognition of diverse assistance needs and the introduction of new forms of support. One notable development is the inclusion of service-based assistance, which will now include basic living necessities, essential nursing services, medical care and burial services.

In the past, social assistance mainly relied on the distribution of goods or cash payments. The new law recognizes service-based assistance as a legal right, significantly broadening the scope of social assistance. The challenge now lies in effectively providing such services, which will be a key issue in the development of the social assistance system.

The property ownership criteria have also been revised. In the past, many people with incomes at or below the minimum living standard were unable to qualify due to strict property rules. Some local governments have now lowered the asset threshold, allowing more people to receive assistance.

The methods for verifying income and assets have also become more diversified. Previously, social assistance staff members mainly relied on home visits and neighborhood inquiries, but such methods often proved inaccurate. In today's society, it is much harder to obtain reliable information through such traditional approaches. Therefore, verification methods have become more varied. Digital verification platforms not only reduce the workload for staff members but also improve the accuracy of the process.

At present, different forms of social assistance overlap, particularly because minimum living allowance status is tied to many other welfare benefits. The new legislation therefore stresses the importance of self-reliance among beneficiaries. However, without concrete supporting measures, which include broader welfare reform, achieving this goal will be difficult.

For now, the law mainly sets out broad principles and clarifies government responsibilities. The staff members can be held accountable if they fail to provide assistance to those who qualify or ensure basic support where needed. At the same time, they will also bear responsibility for incorrectly approving assistance.

However, the law remains relatively vague when it comes to the rights and obligations of aid recipients themselves, making implementation more challenging in practice. Defining a clear balance of rights, responsibilities and obligations for recipients will likely require further detailed rules.

The next step involves drafting implementation regulations, since the law itself sets out broad principles. Many provisions need clearer definitions. The immediate priority, therefore, is for the relevant departments to formulate detailed implementation rules for the law on social assistance.

Another priority is strengthening training at the grassroots level. The quality of frontline personnel determines the quality of social assistance work. Conditions and challenges vary widely across regions, and the capabilities of local staff members also differ considerably.

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VIEWS

Zhang Yongan

Partners needed in war against drugs

More than a century ago, China and the United States learned a critical lesson: drug trafficking is a global problem and no country, however powerful, could fight it on its own.

One of the earliest steps toward international cooperation came in 1909, when representatives from 13 countries gathered in Shanghai for the International Opium Commission.

It was the first time the international community collectively addressed the opium issue. The meeting adopted a set of resolutions aimed at restricting opium cultivation, limiting production and controlling distribution. In that effort, US advocacy and China's active participation became key drivers of the emerging international drug-control framework.

This momentum continued with the signing of the International Opium Convention in The Hague in 1912, which established international rules governing opium production and trade and called on countries to limit opium use strictly to medical and scientific purposes.

Both China and the US remained important contributors to subsequent international conventions aimed at regulating the manufacture and trade of narcotics.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese government launched a nationwide campaign against drug abuse and trafficking.

Within a few years, the widespread narcotics problem that had plagued the country was effectively eliminated. China has maintained a zero-tolerance policy toward drugs.

Modern China-US counternarcotics cooperation began following the normalization of bilateral relations in the 1970s. During the then US president Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, the two sides held their first discussions on drug control cooperation.

After diplomatic relations were established in 1979, practical collaboration soon followed, including exchanges on customs interdiction techniques and law-enforcement training.

In the following decades, bilateral cooperation deepened and counternarcotics efforts became one of the most constructive and stable pillars of China-US relations.

Yet the drug landscape has evolved. Between 2012 and 2024, new synthetic drugs and psychoactive substances spread rapidly and potent synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl, moved to the center of global counternarcotics discussions.

In the US, opioid abuse escalated into a major public health crisis, placing immense pressure on medical systems and social governance. China and the US maintained close technical communication on drug trends, with regular exchanges on investigative leads, counternarcotics policies and emerging challenges.

In October 2017, the eighth China-US counternarcotics intelligence meeting discussed issues of mutual concern, including fentanyl and new psychoactive substances.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

At the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump reached important consensus on strengthening law enforcement cooperation in drug control.

China then took a significant step. On May 1, 2019, it became the first country in the world to impose full control over fentanyl-related substances. According to the US International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2025, there have been no seizures of fentanyl-related substances directly entering the US from China since then.

The two countries also advanced collaboration in law enforcement. In 2017 alone, China's National Narcotics Control Commission shared more than 400 investigative leads related to fentanyl procurement and over 500 concerning US customers purchasing new psychoactive substances. Joint investigations helped crack several transnational drug cases.

Information exchange and case coordination became central to bilateral cooperation, making fentanyl governance a model of international counternarcotics cooperation.

However, cooperation was disrupted when the US imposed sanctions on China's National Narcotics Laboratory over what it described as "human rights issues" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

In August 2022, after then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, China-US counternarcotics cooperation was suspended.

As China-US ties stabilized in 2023, drug control was one of the first areas where dialogue resumed. Both sides agreed to establish a China-US counternarcotics working group, bringing cooperation back on track.

At its first meeting in Beijing in January 2024, the working group identified priority areas for cooperation. China subsequently placed 46 new psychoactive substances under control and strengthened oversight over seven chemicals used in fentanyl production.

However, new challenges emerged when the US imposed an additional 20 percent tariff on imports from China in early 2025, citing concerns over fentanyl precursor chemicals. The unilateral move disrupted not only global trade but also the fragile framework of anti-drug cooperation.

China responded with restraint while continuing to strengthen regulatory controls. In March 2025, it released a white paper outlining its policies and achievements in regulating fentanyl-related compounds. Gradually, cooperation regained momentum.

During the China-US economic and trade consultations held in Malaysia in October 2025, the two sides reached an important consensus on fentanyl governance.

High-level engagement soon followed. After the two presidents met in the Republic of Korea, the US lifted the additional "fentanyl tariffs", while China tightened controls over exports of specific precursor chemicals to the US, Mexico and Canada.

In November 2025, FBI Director Kash Patel visited China to discuss drug control cooperation.

It was the first time in over a decade that an FBI director had visited the country, marking the restoration of key communication channels. Shortly afterward, cross-agency teams from both countries held online consultations to coordinate future efforts to address the fentanyl challenge.

The resumption of cooperation demonstrates the resilience of China-US counternarcotics collaboration.

Looking back over more than a century of interaction — from the Shanghai International Opium Commission to today's fentanyl challenge — China-US counternarcotics cooperation has evolved from early diplomatic dialogue into a practical law enforcement partnership.

The lesson is clear: Unilateral pressure cannot stop the flow of drugs or dismantle transnational production and distribution networks.

The China-US experience demonstrates that cooperation, rather than confrontation, is the most effective way forward.

Going ahead, China-US counternarcotics cooperation will continue to face complex conditions. But as long as both sides remain committed to mutual respect, equality and the shared goal of protecting human well-being, cooperation can withstand uncertainties and sustain positive momentum in global governance.

Working together toward a drug-free, healthier and more peaceful world, the two countries can open a new chapter in international counternarcotics cooperation.

The author is the director of the International Center for Drug Policy Studies at Shanghai University.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Online
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Denis Simon

China-US engagement conducive to global stability

At a time of mounting geopolitical uncertainty and economic fragmentation, renewed high-level engagement between China and the United States remains essential for global stability. As the world's two largest economies and most consequential technological giants, their relationship continues to shape the trajectory of the international system.

Even amid strategic competition, pragmatic cooperation between Beijing and Washington is not only possible but necessary.

A comparison between US President Donald Trump's visit to China in 2017 and the upcoming visit in 2026 illustrates how profoundly the structural foundations of the bilateral relationship have changed — and why engagement today carries different but significant possibilities.

First, renewed China—US engagement can contribute to global stability by reestablishing channels of high-level dialogue and reducing the risks associated with unmanaged strategic competition.

In a world marked by regional conflicts, supply-chain disruptions, and energy volatility, ongoing communication between major countries is a critical stabilizing mechanism.

Recent diplomatic contacts between US and Chinese officials ahead of Trump's visit have focused on trade disputes, agricultural exports and strategic materials such as rare earths, signaling that both sides recognize the value of dialogue in preventing further escalation.

Such engagement has implications beyond the bilateral relationship.

When China and the US communicate effectively, they help anchor the global economy and mitigate the risk of geopolitical shocks cascading into systemic crises.

Cooperation on issues such as energy security, climate governance, and financial stability is essential because the two nations have considerable influence over international institutions. Even limited progress in bilateral relations can generate positive spillover effects for the global system.

Global Lens

Second, despite persistent tensions, there are opportunities for cooperation in trade, science and technology and education.

Trade and investment ties between the two countries remain deep and resilient, reflecting decades of integration.

Even during periods of heightened friction — including the tariff escalation of recent years — both governments have continued negotiating arrangements designed to stabilize economic relations.

In 2025, for example, the two sides agreed to a temporary trade truce that reduced tariffs and export restrictions while encouraging increased Chinese purchases of agricultural products from the US.

This shows that both countries have an incentive to pursue cooperation in areas where interests converge. There are three main benefits of this approach.

The first is trade stabilization. Businesses on both sides want predictability rather than further tensions.

Maintaining tariff ceilings, reducing non-tariff barriers, and reopening suspended economic dialogue mechanisms could gradually rebuild confidence.

The second is supply-chain resilience. The pandemic and geopolitical tensions have exposed vulnerabilities in global production networks.

Rather than pursuing complete decoupling that is costly and disruptive, Washington and Beijing could work toward "smart openness" by continuing cooperation in key sectors while diversifying risk.

The third is cooperation in global economic governance. From energy markets to financial stability, the world economy requires coordination among major powers.

The current volatility in oil supply and shipping routes underscores how disruptions in one region quickly affect the entire global system.

In this context, even limited coordination between China and the US can stabilize markets and reassure investors.

Yet the nature of engagement today differs fundamentally from that of a decade ago. Trump visited China in 2017 when economic interdependence defined the core of China-US relations.

Although concerns about trade imbalances and technology competition were emerging, the relationship remained largely cooperative.

The visit in 2017 featured extensive ceremonial diplomacy, including meetings in Beijing and cultural events at the Forbidden City, reflecting an atmosphere that emphasized partnership and economic opportunity.

The context of the upcoming 2026 visit is far more complex. The bilateral relationship has seen a shift toward more pronounced strategic competition, set against a backdrop that has always included both integration and tensions.

At the same time, the continuing dialogue shows that competition has not eliminated the need for cooperation.

Unlike the Cold War rivalry between the US and the former Soviet Union, the China-US relationship is deeply embedded in the global economy.

Trade flows, financial interdependence, and scientific collaboration continue to link the two countries in ways that make complete disengagement impractical.

The difference between Trump's first visit and his upcoming second visit is expected to reflect a broader transformation: from engagement driven primarily by economic globalization to engagement aimed at managing strategic competition.

In 2017, the goal was to expand economic ties and resolve trade disputes within a framework of partnership.

Now, the objective is more modest but also more urgent — preventing rivalry from spiraling into confrontation while preserving areas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

This evolution does not imply that the bilateral relationship is declining. Rather, it suggests that China and the US must adapt their diplomatic approach to a new reality.

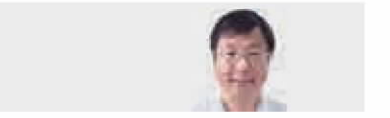
Engagement today not only involves building trust through direct negotiation and consultation, but also includes establishing guardrails that prevent competition from destabilizing the international system.

In this sense, a renewed China-US engagement is indispensable. The world's two largest economies may compete in technology, security and influence, but they also share the responsibility to ensure global stability.

By sustaining dialogue, pursuing pragmatic economic cooperation, and acknowledging the structural changes that have reshaped their relationship, Beijing and Washington can keep competition within bounds and ensure that the international system continues to function in ways conducive to enhanced global peace and prosperity.

The lesson from the past decade is clear: even in an era of sustained competition, engagement is not a concession but a strategic necessity.

The author is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

The author is former deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily.
kangbing@chinadaily.com.cn

No-waste cities will turn trash into treasure

The city of Shenzhen has reportedly started mining a landfill long believed to be the largest in China. Since 1983, the landfill served as Shenzhen's primary dumping place.

By the time it stopped operations in 2005, it had accumulated some 2.55 million cubic meters of trash that rose to a 110-meter-high hill. That towering pile of rubbish is located barely a kilometer away from a high-speed train station now under construction.

According to the new plan, about 6,000 cubic meters of trash will be excavated from the landfill daily. The reusable stuff will be recycled while the remainder will be sent to a power plant as fuel.

In a few years, the trash hill will get removed, and the venue will be turned into a science and technology zone focused on artificial intelligence and the digital economy. I look forward to witnessing how Cinderella turns into Snow White.

The Shenzhen project is part of China's efforts to develop no-waste cities, a program that aims to significantly decrease solid waste in urban centers. When the program kicked off in 2019, 16 cities and regions, including Shenzhen, were chosen as pilot zones.

Public awareness campaigns were rolled out, urging people to prioritize environmental protection. Waste classification drives were conducted, free plastic bags were restricted and excessive packaging was curbed. At the same time, a central government-owned company was established to strengthen the recycling sector.

The efforts proved fruitful, and within three years, the pilot program was expanded to 121 cities and regions. Today, nearly 200 urban centers are part of the program and plans are to cover the entire country by the end of 2035.

The Shenzhen project is part of China's efforts to develop no-waste cities, a program that aims to significantly decrease solid waste in urban centers.

Since China embarked on its reform and opening-up nearly 50 years ago, the authorities have followed a trial-first approach to solving major issues in the country. With a population of over 1.4 billion and great disparity in development levels and cultural backgrounds, sweeping programs cannot be rolled out at one go.

The same is true for the manner in which the no-waste city program is being implemented.

Turning waste into a national resource is not an easy task, especially because the project requires full cooperation from the public.

It needs people to change their waste disposal habits, which may affect the interests of different social and economic groups.

When waste classification was introduced about 10 years ago, we were told to classify household waste into four categories — recyclable, hazardous, kitchen waste and others — and throw them into four different bins. Initially, compliance was high.

But after some time, when we realized that nobody was supervising our garbage disposal and when we saw neighbors breaking the rules without getting punished, we lazybones followed suit. There are four trash bins at the exit of our apartment building though we have long given up the classification at home.

That, however, does not mean the waste goes without being classified.

The garbage collector in our compound meticulously searches all the bins to ensure that plastic bottles, packaging boxes, clothes and metallic items are set aside for sale before he takes the remaining waste to the community collection station on his electric tricycle.

With recyclable materials collected from a dozen or so trash bins in our complex for over a decade, the garbage collector has not only raised his family in Beijing but also supported his son's higher education.

To the middle-aged collector, the trash bins are a small but steady source of income. And he allows no interference from outsiders in his livelihood. I once saw him confront an outsider who attempted to "mine" the bins without his permission.

Most of the waste coming out of China's households is now classified not by families but by the waste collectors.

This is very different from the original design of the classification campaign, though the end result is acceptable if all reusable items are sent for recycling and lead to a decrease in solid waste.

We still have a long way to go to realize the dream of no-waste cities. On the way, we may even go astray sometimes. But now that we are aiming in the right direction, I firmly believe we will eventually get there. Trust me.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

EHIZUELEN MICHAEL MITCHELL OMORUYI

Practical enabler

In a world where trade is increasingly politicized, China's zero-tariff approach offers an alternative vision — one based on openness, partnership and shared development



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



At a time when protectionism, geopolitical fragmentation and industrial rivalries are impacting the global economy, China's decision to grant zero-tariff treatment to the 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations stands out as both strategic and consequential. It is more than a trade adjustment — it is a clear signal about the future direction of South-South economic cooperation. China's approach signals a move away from traditional North-South hierarchies toward more horizontal, partnership-based models of cooperation that emphasize mutual benefit, market access and shared growth.

Global trade is under growing strain. The World Trade Organization reports continued uncertainty in trade policies into 2026, alongside uneven and fragile growth. Against this backdrop, China's move to eliminate tariffs on exports from the 53 African countries it has diplomatic ties with offers a clear alternative: It reaffirms that openness — rather than fragmentation — remains significant to sustainable growth.

Recent WTO monitoring trends indicate new tariffs and other import measures increased more than fourfold from mid-October 2024 to mid-October 2025 compared to the prior 12-month period, marking the highest coverage in over 15 years of WTO trade monitoring. China's zero-tariff policy therefore can function as a stabilizing countermeasure, preserving export opportunities for African economies in an increasingly restrictive global trade environment.

This policy reinforces China's role as a leading practitioner of South-South cooperation, shifting the emphasis from assistance to market-driven opportunity. It aligns with broader development goals while giving African economies direct access to one of the world's largest consumer markets.

The scale of China-Africa engagement underscores the importance of this initiative. According to China's General Administration of Customs, bilateral trade between Africa and China exceeded $348 billion in 2025, with continued expansion into 2026 driven by commodity exports and manufacturing linkages. Africa is deepening its integration into global value chains, with China acting as a central partner. Removing tariffs strengthens this trajectory by lowering costs, improving competitiveness and encouraging export growth. Moreover, China's increasing share of African exports in some key sectors means that the tariff removal not only boosts trade volumes but also reduces price volatility risks for exporters, enabling more predictable planning and investment decisions.

For African economies, the implications are immediate. In agriculture, duty-free access enhances the competitiveness of products such as cocoa, coffee, sesame, tea and fresh produce. China's middle-income group — now numbering more than 400 million — continues to drive demand for high-quality imports, creating opportunities for African exporters. The expansion of agricultural exports, including products such as Kenyan avocados, shows how improved market access can generate tangible gains.

At the same time, a core challenge persists across the "farm to market" system: Many African farmers produce more than ever but capture limited value because they remain confined to fragmented local markets, dependent on intermediaries and disconnected from global pricing and demand. By eliminating tariffs, China's policy can help transform this dynamic into a "farm to global market" system, creating stronger demand signals, improving price competitiveness and encouraging investment in logistics, processing and digital trade platforms that connect producers directly to international buyers. This shift is particularly significant for smallholder farmers, who constitute the majority of Africa's agricultural workforce.

In the minerals sector, the impact is even more strategic. Africa holds significant reserves of lithium, copper and rare earth elements — resources essential for the green transition and advanced manufacturing sectors. Zero tariffs improve price competitiveness and can attract further investment in extraction and processing in Africa. However, long-term benefits will depend on whether some African countries can move beyond raw material exports to value-added production, which underscores the importance of industrial policy coordination.

Manufacturing also stands to gain. Light industries such as textiles, garments and leather goods can leverage tariff-free access to enter the Chinese market, supporting job creation. Those African countries investing in industrial parks and export-oriented production are particularly well positioned to benefit. Emerging sectors, including processed foods, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods, offer additional opportunities for diversification. Historical experience from export-led economies suggests that preferential market access can serve as a catalyst for industrial take-off when combined with supportive policies such as skills development, infrastructure investment and access to finance.

Beyond sectoral gains, the policy has broader developmental implications. By facilitating trade, it supports industrialization, employment and income growth. It also complements existing cooperation frameworks, including infrastructure investment and industrial partnerships, creating a more integrated model linking trade, investment and capacity-building. This reflects a broader shift toward development ecosystems, where trade policy, infrastructure, finance and technology interact to produce cumulative economic effects rather than isolated gains.

Yet a deeper challenge remains: coordination across fragmented markets. In some African economies, increased production and trade integration have not translated into proportional gains in income or value capture. This is because producers, exporters, logistics providers, financiers and regulators operate in poorly aligned systems marked by information gaps and weak linkages. As a result, companies struggle to scale production, meet standards and move up value chains.

In this context, China's zero-tariff policy goes beyond conventional trade liberalization. By guaranteeing large-scale market access, it reduces uncertainty, anchors demand and creates stronger incentives for coordination. Lower tariffs make it possible for companies to invest more in logistics, quality upgrading and market integration, aligning incentives across supply chains. When combined with digital tools — such as e-commerce platforms, digital payments and logistics tracking systems — this can help overcome coordination failures and connect fragmented markets. Digital coordination infrastructure further enhances this process by enabling real-time communication, improving transaction efficiency and increasing transparency across supply chains.

To fully benefit, however, African countries must address structural constraints. Logistics inefficiencies, high transport costs and non-tariff barriers — including certification requirements and customs procedures — continue to restrict trade potential.

Maximizing the benefits of zero tariffs will therefore require complementary policies. African countries must invest in productive capacity, strengthen their regulatory systems and deepen regional integration through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. Upgrading value chains and improving export quality will also be essential to translate market access into sustained growth.

Therefore, China's zero-tariff policy should be seen not as an endpoint, but as an enabling framework. It opens the door to deeper economic engagement and practical regional cooperation.

The author is an associate professor and the executive director of the Center for Nigerian Studies at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

MA HANZHI

African quick step

China's zero-tariff initiative exemplifies its sustained support for developing countries both in multilateral trading system and industrial development





WU PING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Starting May 1, China extended zero-tariff treatment to the 53 African countries that have diplomatic relations with China. Concurrently, it will advance the negotiation and signing of China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development and upgrade green lanes to further expand the access of African agricultural exports to the Chinese market.

According to an announcement by the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council, from May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2028, China will apply zero-tariff treatment to in-quota goods imported from 20 African countries that have established diplomatic ties with China and are not classified as the least developed countries, provided they comply with the rules of origin and hold the required certificate of origin.

For the 33 least developed African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, the Chinese government has extended zero-tariff treatment to 100 percent of their tariff lines, effective Dec 1, 2024. This makes China the first major economy in the world to grant unilateral, full-coverage zero-tariff treatment to all African countries that have diplomatic relations with it, and to all least developed countries that have diplomatic ties with it. This initiative is key to upgrading China-Africa trade and economic cooperation.

First, the zero-tariff treatment meets Africa's strong desire to expand exports to China. For too long, some African goods have faced unstable export channels and relatively high market access barriers, making it difficult to reach markets consistently. China's zero-tariff policy can help smooth these channels and share the opportunities of the Chinese market with the continent. This move can also help enhance the competitiveness of local African products and create profits for businesses on both sides.

In the short term, zero-tariff treatment will notably help African agricultural, mining and light industrial products enter the market more easily. Countries with production advantages in agriculture, such as Kenya, South Africa and Cote d'Ivoire, are particularly well-positioned to benefit directly.

For example, China and Kenya have signed the Early Harvest Arrangement of the Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development. Under this arrangement, Kenyan tea, coffee and avocados entered the Chinese market duty-free and quota-free starting May 1. Similarly, under the early harvest arrangement between China and the Republic of the Congo, 100 percent of tariff lines were zero-rated for Congolese goods, allowing agricultural specialties such as tuckahoe, peanuts and cocoa beans to enter the market more quickly, while the Republic of the Congo will also further open its market to Chinese goods.

As the largest developing member of the World Trade Organization, China has long actively supported the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system. The zero-tariff initiative is undoubtedly the latest example of this effort.

Second, the zero-tariff initiative opens new doors for Africa to better harness its critical mineral wealth. Against the backdrop of the global green energy transition, Africa's rich deposits of cobalt, platinum group metals, and other key minerals have made it a vital hub for resource supply. Yet, due to limited processing capacity, fragmented industrial chains and poor infrastructure, some African nations remain trapped in the "resource curse" — exporting raw materials with low value addition while struggling to achieve economic transformation.

The zero-tariff policy can inject new dynamic into the upgrading of African mineral resources. Previously, Chinese companies preferred to import raw ores from Africa, as processed mineral products faced high tariff barriers, making local processing economically unappealing. Now, under the zero-tariff framework, processed African minerals — such as refined metals and precursors — can enter China duty-free, provided they meet the rules of origin. The requirement of "regional value content of not less than 40 percent" is achievable, since local ores, African-origin materials, and even Chinese-origin inputs exported to Africa all count toward the threshold.

This differential cost makes deep processing in Africa more profitable than simply exporting raw ores, thereby incentivizing Chinese companies to shift from "buying ores" to "investing in processing chains" — building complete mineral supply chains in Africa, from exploration and extraction to processing, along with integrated upstream and downstream industrial parks. This transformation not only enhances Africa's local processing capacity but also helps turn its resource advantages into genuine development strengths.

Third, this preferential access paves the way for a closer shared China-Africa market. Zero tariffs mark only the beginning of deeper pragmatic cooperation. The ultimate goal is to move both sides toward a free trade-oriented partnership. So far, China has signed new framework agreements on economic partnership for shared development with 34 African countries, creating long-term, stable and predictable institutional safeguards for deepening China-Africa trade and investment.

As the benefits of zero tariffs fully materialize, each side will come to better recognize the value of the other's market. That growing recognition will, in turn, accelerate the implementation of existing framework agreements, pave the way toward bilateral free trade agreements and eventually lead to a free trade area between China and African countries.

Against the backdrop of building a China-Africa shared market, cooperation on production capacity between the two sides is poised for unprecedented major opportunities. China has the world's most complete industry chains, while Africa is home to the largest number of developing countries. They are highly complementary in their industry and supply chains.

Zero-tariff policies and institutional arrangements will work in tandem, helping Chinese enterprises go deeper into the African market.

From a market access perspective, zero tariffs will lower the export costs of products made by Chinese-invested factories in Africa. Locally processed goods that meet rules of origin can enter the Chinese market duty-free, improving the expected profitability and economic viability of value-added processing investments in Africa.

From an investment security standpoint, signing agreements on economic partnership for shared development gives Chinese companies stronger legal protections when investing in or building factories across Africa. This reduces risk and creates a stable, predictable environment for long-term operations. Together, these two forces will help the continent build its own manufacturing base. The result is a collaborative model — Chinese technology plus African resources, localized production — that raises Africa's position in the global industry chains.

The deep integration of Chinese capital and technology with African resources will give rise to more "Made in Africa" goods. This will not only meet Africa's own development needs, but also keep such goods flowing into the Chinese market, helping the continent attract investments from China and other countries, move toward a new height in global manufacturing and establish itself as the next world production hub. In this sense, one important role of zero tariffs is to build confidence in the deep integration of the two large markets of China and Africa for a shared future in multilateral trade.

The author is an assistant research fellow at the Department for Developing Countries Studies at the China Institute of International Studies. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

Qwen-Taobao integration to boost 618 shopping

By **CHENG YU**
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese tech company Alibaba Group said on Monday it has fully integrated its artificial intelligence chatbot Qwen with its super e-commerce platform Taobao, allowing users to search for products, compare items and complete purchases through natural language conversations.

The move marks a major step from Chinese tech firms toward turning AI chatbots into full-scale shopping gateways and intensifying the global race in AI commercialization, especially when there are only a few days ahead of China's annual 618 shopping festival.

Under the new move, users can open the Qwen app and ask the AI assistant to recommend products, compare prices and place orders directly on Taobao. Within the Taobao app itself, users can also access Qwen, offering functions such as AI-powered virtual try-ons, discount calculations and automatic low-price deal hunting.

In a trial, China Daily found that the Qwen app was able to handle multi-turn conversations and refine recommendations based on evolving user preferences, signaling how AI systems are moving beyond chat interfaces into tools capable of executing real commercial transactions and services.

In March, ByteDance began testing the integration of its Doubao AI chatbot with Douyin e-commerce, enabling users to complete purchases and payments directly inside the Doubao app without jumping to the short-video platform.

The timing is significant. China's annual 618 shopping festival, one of the country's largest online retail events, is about to begin, with both Alibaba and ByteDance positioning AI as the front door to online shopping.

According to QuestMobile data for the first quarter, ByteDance's Doubao had 345 million monthly active users, compared with 166 million for Qwen. The gap has increased pressure on Alibaba to secure a foothold in AI-driven shopping by tightly integrating Qwen with Taobao's vast product ecosystem, helping prevent users from drifting toward rival AI platforms.

The integration also marks a broader restructuring inside Alibaba aimed at accelerating AI commercialization. In March, the company established the Alibaba token hub business group to unify AI model development, platform services and consumer applications under a more coordinated strategy.

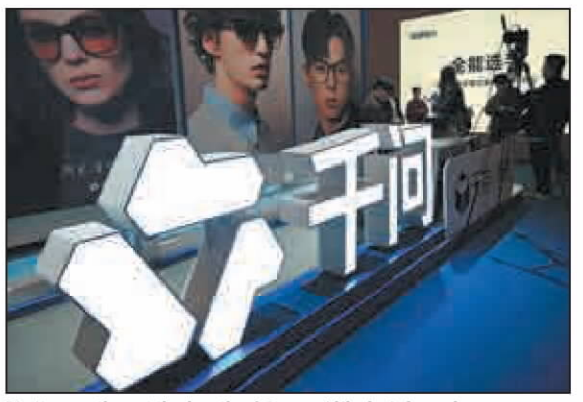
Alibaba has been laying the groundwork for AI commerce for months. During this year's Spring Festival holiday, it launched a heavily promoted campaign offering billions of yuan in subsidies, allowing users to order items such as milk tea through AI voice commands for as little as 1 fen (0.15 cent).

According to the 2026 Government Work Report delivered at this year's two sessions, China will "advance and expand the AI Plus Initiative", and for the first time, the country will "create new forms of smart economy".

The country will also promote faster application of new-generation intelligent terminals and AI agents and encourage large-scale commercial application of AI in key sectors and fields, so as to foster new forms and models of AI-native business, the report said.

Lu Ming, an economist and a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said AI-powered products and services are lowering the cost of making purchasing decisions by simplifying interactions between users and digital platforms in China.

"AI is breaking the traditional boundaries of consumer groups and geographic regions. It is evolving from a chat tool into an assistant that can actually complete tasks," Lu said. "To some extent, AI is also driving consumption by expanding user groups."



Visitors gather at the booth of Qwen, Alibaba's large language model, during a high-tech expo in Shanghai on March 12.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



An aerial image shows Piraeus Port in Greece. The port's annual throughput has exceeded 5.6 million TEUs so far, ranking 25th globally. XINHUA

Piraeus Port rises on back of stronger ties

Efforts from major SOE bear fruit as Greek trade terminal reverses losses

By **REN QI**
renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

> "These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub."
>
> **Han Chao,** chairman of Piraeus Port Authority

Since China COSCO Shipping Corp officially took over its operations a decade ago, Piraeus Port in Greece has transformed from an aging facility into a highly coordinated global hub, achieving remarkable growth in capacity, revenue and technological advancement.

In 2016, the annual container throughput of the port was approximately 680,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), ranking 93rd globally with outdated facilities and limited capacity. Today, it has become one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean, with annual throughput exceeding 5.6 million TEUs, ranking as high as 25th globally.

Over the past decade, the transformation of the port's "hard power" has been the most intuitive. Terminals have been continuously extended, deep-water channels dredged, automated equipment gradually put into use, and bridge cranes and yard systems constantly upgraded. The once scattered and inefficient operational scenes have gradually transformed into a highly coordinated modern operating system.

Piraeus Port has now become the fourth-largest container port, the second-largest cruise homeport, and the largest ferry port in Europe, as well as an important roll-on/roll-off automobile hub and ship repair center in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub," said Han Chao, chairman of the port operator Piraeus Port Authority SA.

In recent years, the port's revenue and profit have continued to grow, reversing a long-term trend of losses. COSCO Shipping has invested over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) locally, creating thousands of direct jobs and generating tens of thousands of indirect employment opportunities.

"It has changed not only the port itself, but also the relationship between the city and its people," said Yannis Moralis, mayor of Piraeus.

According to the recently released financial report of Piraeus Port Authority, the company's total revenue in 2025 reached approximately 251 million euros ($295.5 million), a year-on-year increase of 8.6 percent; operating profit stood at 132 million euros, up 2.2 percent year-on-year.

Savvas Sanozidis, secretary of the board of directors of Piraeus Port Authority, said the transmission and integration of COSCO Shipping's corporate values have effectively strengthened supervision over management, promoting transparency, prudence and a high sense of responsibility in all aspects of work, providing a strong guarantee for the company's long-term sustainable development.

Stefanos Gkikas, deputy minister of maritime affairs and insular policy of Greece, stated that the fruitful cooperation between COSCO Shipping and Piraeus Port Authority over the past decade has significantly enhanced the port's competitiveness and further consolidated Greece's position in the international shipping sector.

The development path of the port is also quietly transforming. Stepping into the office building of the container terminal, one can see large screens displaying vessel dynamics, operational progress, and equipment status in real time.

According to Han, the port has built a digital monitoring platform covering the entire port area and introduced 5G and artificial intelligence technologies, driving the production organization method to evolve from "manual planning" to "intelligent coordination".

Looking ahead to the next decade, the development blueprint for Piraeus Port is clearly defined.

"The future port will be smarter and greener," Han added.

According to Han, the construction of the COSCO Shipping Piraeus Port park project was officially launched in April. Once completed, it will become a modern center integrating sports, leisure, and social activities.

Saint Laurent restarts sales in Hangzhou

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Luxury fashion brand Saint Laurent has resumed normal sales to an area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, previously reported as "blacklisted" amid concerns over high return rates and livestreaming-driven consumption patterns.

Tests conducted by The Paper on the brand's official Tmall flagship store on Monday showed that addresses in the Yingfeng Street area of Xiaoshan district, which had previously been denied service, could once again place orders.

A report on Sunday by The Paper found that 20 addresses in Yingfeng were rejected for sale by Saint Laurent, while changing the shipping address to other Hangzhou districts allowed orders to go through.

Yingfeng subdistrict, dubbed the "Manhattan of Hangzhou", was established in mid-2020 and spans 23.1 square kilometers. It hosts a dense cluster of cultural media companies and livestreaming e-commerce agencies. The area has become a focal point of the fast-growing livestreaming economy in the e-commerce capital.

Earlier reports highlighted that some merchants, facing behaviors such as "wear and return" by livestreaming consumers, had implemented self-protective measures including regional blacklisting.

The story quickly attracted widespread attention. The controversy over Saint Laurent has now drawn attention to other luxury brands. The Paper also found that Miu Miu, the Italian label under the Prada Group, also limits sales of some items on its Tmall flagship store to at least three Hangzhou subdistricts.

Some merchants defend such measures as risk management, citing high return rates and disputes. Yingfeng's permanent population exceeds 220,000, with roughly 15,000 registered enterprises and a youth demographic of around 70 percent, far above local averages — factors that may contribute to elevated return activity. Courier staff told The Paper that the concentration of livestreaming businesses in Yingfeng may explain the region's high return incidence.

Industry experts stress the fine line between business autonomy and consumer rights.

Cheng Weixiong, a fashion analyst and founder of Shanghai Liangqi Brand Management Co Ltd, said from the merchant's perspective, facing repeated instances of malicious and abnormal returns from the region, blacklisting is indeed a last resort.

However, Cheng noted that from the consumer's standpoint, implementing a blanket ban that punishes everyone for the actions of a few is fundamentally unfair.

Cheng said: "Of course, platforms cannot simply wash their hands of the matter.

"They must promptly halt such regional blacklisting while implementing precise risk controls. The goal should be to prevent a minority from acting badly, ensuring that everyone else does not have to foot the bill."

A clothing goods seller, Cathy Huang said that blacklisting entire subdistricts was often their self-protective measure after individuals kept breaking restrictions via alternative accounts. "As a seller, I can only avoid risks this way," she said.

Some e-commerce operators described frequent returns of worn items, sometimes bearing perfume or makeup. "Some consumers treat returns as a free way to showcase clothes in livestreams, leaving merchants to clean items for resale," Huang said.

Brazil's visa waiver to enhance bilateral partnership

By **LI JING**
lijing2009@chinadaily.com.cn

> Brazil is the most distinctive destination in South America for Chinese tourists, and its cultural attractions such as football and Carnival have long appealed to Chinese visitors."
>
> **Xu Ning,** general manager of the Australia, Americas and Africa division at Beijing-based travel agency UTour

Brazil's decision to grant short-term visa-free entry to Chinese citizens is expected to do more than stimulate tourism demand. Analysts say the move lowers barriers for business travel and will help deepen trade and investment ties between the two major developing economies.

The Brazilian government announced on Thursday that holders of ordinary Chinese passports would be allowed to enter the country visa-free for stays of up to 30 days starting Monday. The policy will remain in effect through Dec 31.

Following the announcement, Chinese online travel platforms reported an immediate rise in interest in Brazil. Data show searches for Brazil-related destinations climbing sharply within hours, with cities such as Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador among the most searched by Chinese travelers.

"Brazil has become one of the fastest-growing long-haul destinations for Chinese travelers in recent years," said Yang Han, a researcher at Chinese travel platform Qunar's big data research institute.

During the just-concluded May Day holiday, Brazil ranked among the top 10 outbound destinations for Chinese tourists, with flight bookings from China to Brazil rising 95 percent year-on-year, Yang said.

Travel agencies expect the visa waiver to further boost demand, particularly during the upcoming summer travel season and the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday period later this year.

"Brazil is the most distinctive destination in South America for Chinese tourists, and its cultural attractions such as football and Carnival have long appealed to Chinese visitors," said Xu Ning, general manager of the Australia, Americas and Africa division at Beijing-based travel agency UTour.

Because Brazil often serves as a gateway to the region, Xu added that easier entry could also encourage multi-country trips across South America, including itineraries covering countries such as Argentina, Chile and Peru.

Beyond tourism, analysts say the visa waiver could reduce frictions in commercial exchanges between China and Brazil, where face-to-face visits remain important for negotiations, site inspections and investment discussions.

"Visa-free travel will facilitate the entire commercial process — from market research and negotiations to factory inspections and post-investment personnel mobility," said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, during an earlier interview with China Daily.

The policy comes as economic ties between the two countries continue to deepen. Data from the Brazilian Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services show bilateral trade volume reached $171 billion in 2025, an increase of 8.2 percent year-on-year. The figures cement China's status as Brazil's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years.

Brazilian businesses are also viewing the policy as a practical step toward smoother commercial engagement.

"Local companies, especially in tourism, trade, services and real estate, see the policy change as positive, as it reduces administrative barriers and facilitates short-term travel from China," said Gabriela Lima, a labor partner at Brazilian law firm TozziniFreire.

Businesses that rely on international mobility see the measure as enabling exploratory visits, negotiations and client engagement, she said.

Lima added that easier travel could increase the frequency of site visits and early-stage investment discussions, helping companies move projects forward more quickly.

Analysts say sectors where China and Brazil have strong economic complementarities may benefit most from easier travel.

China has advantages in manufacturing, equipment supply and infrastructure construction, while Brazil is a global powerhouse in agricultural exports such as soybeans, beef and iron ore.

As companies seek new partnerships, sectors including infrastructure, energy, agribusiness and technology may see more dynamic engagement, Lima said.

Beyond goods trade, analysts say easier mobility may also support growth in service-sector cooperation, such as finance and education, areas where bilateral exchanges remain relatively limited.

Despite the expected boost to exchanges, analysts caution that visa facilitation alone will not remove deeper structural barriers affecting bilateral commerce.

Under the policy, visa-free entry is limited to stays of up to 30 days and does not permit work activities.

"In practice, more regulated sectors are likely to remain attentive to the limits of the measure, particularly the restriction on work activities under visitor status," Lima said.

The temporary nature of the policy could also limit long-term planning for some firms, requiring companies to monitor whether the arrangement will be extended beyond the end of 2026.

"Visa facilitation is not a cure-all," Zhou said. "But it is a clear signal — and an important step toward stronger bilateral cooperation."

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BUSINESS

Real estate shows signs of rebound

Sector's strengthening being driven by second-hand home sales in key cities

By JIANG XUEQING
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

China's real estate market is navigating a pivotal transition toward more sustainable growth, with early signs of stabilization emerging as policy support gains traction and market confidence gradually strengthens.

While the sector's adjustment has weighed on home sales and mortgage demand, the moderation in lending reflects a broader shift toward improved asset quality and more prudent risk management.

Against this backdrop, annual reports from listed banks show that by the end of 2025, the combined outstanding balance of residential mortgages at China's six largest State-owned commercial lenders stood at about 24.48 trillion yuan ($3.6 trillion), down 711.52 billion yuan from the end of 2024, a year-on-year decline of 2.82 percent.

Among them, the outstanding balance of residential mortgages at Industrial and Commercial Bank of China fell by 207.31 billion yuan to 5.88 trillion yuan; China Construction Bank declined by 196.53 billion yuan to 5.99 trillion yuan; Agricultural Bank of China dropped by 168.24 billion yuan to 4.82 trillion yuan; Bank of China declined by 106.48 billion yuan to 3.98 trillion yuan; Bank of Communications fell by 24.15 billion yuan to 1.44 trillion yuan; and Postal Savings Bank of China decreased by 8.81 billion yuan to 2.37 trillion yuan.

These six major banks are the backbone of China's mortgage lending market. According to the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, the outstanding balance of residential mortgages across financial institutions stood at 37.01 trillion yuan at the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, down 1.8 percent year-on-year, with a full-year decrease of 676.8 billion yuan.

All six banks reported negative growth in mortgage balances last year, though to varying degrees. The smallest decline was at PSBC (0.37 percent), followed by BOCOM (1.65 percent) and BOC (2.6 percent), while larger declines were seen at ICBC (3.41 percent), ABC (3.38 percent) and CCB (3.18 percent).

Xue Hongyan, a special researcher at Jiangsu Su Merchants Bank, said the decline in mortgage balances is a natural result of the real estate cycle adjustment, reflecting both weak demand for new mortgages and the runoff of existing loans.

Wang Pengbo, chief analyst at market consultancy Botong Analysys, echoed this view, noting that the decline was driven by a combination of early mortgage repayments by households and subdued homebuying demand last year.

Affected by macroeconomic conditions and the downturn in the property sector, nonperforming mortgage loan ratios have generally risen across the banking industry. By the end of 2025, among the six largest State-owned commercial lenders, only BOC saw its nonperforming mortgage loan ratio edge down by 0.01 percentage point to 0.6 percent, while the other five recorded increases. ICBC's ratio rose by 0.33 percentage point to 1.06 percent, and BOCOM's ratio increased by 0.43 percentage point to 1.01 percent.

Wang Jingwu, senior executive vice-president of ICBC, said that amid economic restructuring, property market adjustment and temporary imbalances between supply and demand, the bank's nonperforming residential mortgage loan ratio has entered a short-term upward trend, which is broadly in line with the banking industrywide trend.

However, he emphasized that China's economic fundamentals remain solid, with strong resilience and significant potential, and that the long-term positive outlook remains unchanged. Risks in personal lending are therefore manageable. He added that ICBC is closely monitoring real estate market trends and implementing national policies aimed at establishing a new development model for the property sector, promoting better housing and stabilizing the market.



Potential homebuyers examine floor plans, prices and promotional offers in front of a model of a residential complex in Huizhou, Guangdong province, on May 1. ZHOU NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Clients apply for personal housing provident fund loans at a branch of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on Sept 19, 2024. FAN SHAOGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Wu Jian, executive vice-president of BOC, said that despite increasing external uncertainties, the underlying conditions supporting China's long-term growth remain intact. BOC will strengthen forward-looking risk assessment, firmly guard against systemic risks, further optimize its credit structure, and enhance risk management in areas such as real estate, local government debt and structural imbalances in key industries.

Zhang Hui, president of BOC, said the bank supported efforts to stabilize the property market last year by issuing more than 500 billion yuan in residential mortgages. This year, it is steadily expanding both mortgage lending and non-housing consumer loans, promoting coordinated development across products, customer segments and consumption scenarios to build a comprehensive consumer ecosystem.

From late 2025 to early 2026, the real estate market exhibited new characteristics: on the one hand, the reduction in interest rates for existing mortgages and housing provident fund loans has pushed the cost of home purchases to a new low; on the other hand, further targeted, effective and sustainable policy support is still needed to bolster market confidence, said Li Yong, an analyst at Soochow Securities.

Zhou Wanfu, executive vice-president of BOCOM, noted that while the real estate market experienced a brief upswing in the first quarter of last year, with mortgage loans growing year-on-year, it remained in a period of deep adjustment in the first quarter of this year, and BOCOM saw mortgage repayments exceed new disbursements, resulting in negative growth. However, he also pointed out that the volume of mortgage applications at the bank has risen significantly since March, up around 15 percent compared with both the first two quarters and the latter half of last year.

Zhou believes this signals a stabilization in the property market. If the trend continues, mortgage lending could gradually return to positive growth this year, helping drive retail loan growth toward target levels.

Supported by a series of ongoing policy measures, China's real estate market showed a trend of steady improvement in the first quarter. Transaction volumes for existing homes in some major cities have rebounded significantly since March.

On March 22, the number of contracts signed at second-hand home agencies in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, hit a five-year high for a single day. On April 11, Shanghai's daily online transaction volume for second-hand homes also reached a five-year high. Some institutions view this as a positive signal that the real estate market is likely to bottom out by the end of 2026.

Data from real estate information provider CRIC show that the transaction area for second-hand homes in 20 major cities nationwide reached about 17.97 million square meters in March, up 117 percent month-on-month and 6 percent year-on-year. In April, the transaction area for second-hand homes in the 20 key cities was approximately 17.93 million sq m, up 17 percent year-on-year. The cumulative transaction area for the first four months in these cities was approximately 59.18 million sq m, an increase of 8 percent year-on-year.

Analysts said this is not merely a short-term rebound from an oversold market, but rather a sign that market confidence is steadily strengthening as mortgage rates are gradually lowered and home purchase policies are gradually relaxed. Furthermore, this trend is likely to continue into the second quarter.

Nation's 'Big Six' banks upgrading consumer credit business

By JIANG XUEQING

Guided by policies aimed at expanding domestic demand and stimulating consumption, the personal credit business of China's six largest State-owned commercial banks has undergone notable structural changes.

Personal consumer loans and personal business loans at several banks have achieved double-digit growth, becoming key drivers of overall personal lending expansion, while personal mortgage loans and credit card businesses have contracted to varying degrees.

By the end of 2025, the outstanding balance of personal consumer loans at China's "Big Six" lenders totaled approximately 3.34 trillion yuan ($491.3 billion), an increase of 569.71 billion yuan from the previous year-end, up 20.56 percent year-on-year. Outstanding personal business loans reached 9.36 trillion yuan, increasing by 1.26 trillion yuan from the previous year-end, up 15.63 percent year-on-year.

This trend broadly aligns with the People's Bank of China's statistical report on the credit structure of financial institutions. By the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, outstanding household loans in renminbi and foreign currencies totaled 83.28 trillion yuan. Specifically, outstanding operating loans grew by 4 percent year-on-year to 25.11 trillion yuan, recording an increase of 937.8 billion yuan. Outstanding consumer loans excluding personal housing loans totaled 21.16 trillion yuan, up 0.7 percent year-on-year, marking an increase of 180.2 billion yuan.

In contrast, outstanding RMB property loans fell to 51.95 trillion yuan by the end of the fourth quarter, down 1.6 percent year-on-year. Among them, outstanding personal housing loans totaled 37.01 trillion yuan, down 1.8 percent year-on-year, with a full-year decline of 676.8 billion yuan.

Yang Haiping, a nonresident research fellow with the Beijing Wealth Management Industry Association, said that despite continued policy support for the property market and signs of recovery in housing sales, the share of residential mortgages in banks' asset allocation is still likely to trend downward.

By the end of 2025, the outstanding balances of personal consumer loans and personal business loans at the "Big Six" banks had both recorded strong year-on-year growth. In personal consumer lending, with the exception of Postal Savings Bank of China, the other five largest banks all achieved double-digit growth. China Construction Bank posted the fastest growth rate at 29.41 percent, followed by Bank of China and Agricultural Bank of China at 28.35 percent and 26.95 percent, respectively.

In personal business lending, four of the "Big Six" banks achieved double-digit growth. CCB again recorded the fastest growth rate at 28.77 percent, followed by ABC and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China at 19.92 percent and 15.03 percent, respectively.

Notably, the growth rates of personal consumer loans and personal business loans at the six largest State-owned commercial lenders were significantly higher than the average growth rate for financial institutions disclosed by PBOC, China's central bank.

Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance, said that large banks, backed by extensive branch networks and strong brand recognition, are able to attract deposits at relatively low costs. This gives them a competitive advantage in offering consumer and business loans at interest rates that small and medium-sized banks struggle to match.



A staff member at the personal loan center of a China Construction Bank branch in Hai'an, Jiangsu province, processes a personal mortgage loan for clients on May 17, 2024. XU JINGBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Since 2024, large banks have seen a marked acceleration in personal consumer lending growth, while some small and medium-sized banks have experienced sharp declines in consumer and business lending due to factors such as new regulations on loan facilitation. This reflects the growing divergence in the retail credit structure across China's banking sector, Dong said.

In terms of asset quality, the nonperforming loan ratios for personal consumer loans among the "Big Six" banks showed mixed trends last year. By the end of 2025, CCB's nonperforming personal consumer loan ratio had fallen from 1.09 percent at the end of 2024 to 1.07 percent, while ABC's ratio had declined from 1.55 percent to 1.46 percent, indicating improved asset quality. Meanwhile, the nonperforming personal consumer loan ratios at Bank of Communications, ICBC, BOC and PSBC all increased. BOCOM recorded the largest increase, rising 0.65 percentage point to 1.77 percent.

During the same period, except for CCB, whose nonperforming personal business loan ratio edged down from 1.59 percent to 1.58 percent, the other five large State-owned commercial lenders all reported increases in their nonperforming personal business loan ratios. BOCOM saw the sharpest rise, climbing 0.73 percentage point to 1.94 percent.

Li Jianjiang, executive vice-president and chief risk officer of CCB, said that in response to rising risks in the retail banking sector in recent years, CCB has significantly optimized its retail credit risk management mechanisms, strengthened risk controls at key stages of the lending process and advanced centralized retail risk management practices. These measures began to show results in 2025, with the pace of increase in nonperforming personal loans narrowing year-on-year.

Li added that risk prevention and control in the retail segment will remain one of the bank's key priorities going forward. As various control measures are further implemented and refined, the bank's asset quality is expected to remain generally stable.

Wang Jingwu, senior executive vice-president and chief risk officer of ICBC, said that with the implementation of policies such as trade-in programs for consumer goods and interest subsidies for personal consumer loans — along with the accelerated rollout of broader policy support measures — the market foundation for personal lending is expected to gradually improve, and the asset quality of personal loans should return to more reasonable levels.

Wang said ICBC has adjusted its internal organizational structure and functions by establishing a dedicated personal credit business department, promoting greater centralization and specialization in personal lending operations. The bank has also strengthened digital and intelligent risk management tools, expanded product innovation and supply in consumer and business lending, actively resolved hidden risks and intensified efforts in the disposal of nonperforming assets.

Through coordinated efforts, the deterioration trend in the bank's personal loans has already begun to slow, he said.

Leading national joint-stock commercial lenders are also stepping up risk management for consumer loans. China Merchants Bank, known for its strong retail banking business, reported a nonperforming loan ratio of 1.22 percent for its small and micro business loans as of the end of 2025, up 0.43 percentage point from the previous year-end. In its 2025 annual report, the bank stated that it will closely monitor market developments, improve its ability to assess risk trends, continuously enrich risk monitoring data dimensions, and iteratively upgrade quantitative risk control models to enable early identification, early warning and early resolution of risks in high-risk businesses.

At the same time, CMB has actively responded to consumption-boosting policies and adopted multiple measures to support consumer spending, resulting in steady growth in its consumer lending business with risks remaining generally manageable.

By the end of last year, the bank's consumer credit business, including credit card loans and consumer loans, had outstanding nonperforming loans totaling 20.72 billion yuan, an increase of 46 million yuan from the previous year-end. However, the NPL ratio declined by 0.02 percentage point to 1.52 percent.

Xu Mingjie, executive vice-president of CMB, said risks in retail lending are still on the rise in 2026, and the asset quality of credit card loans continues to face certain pressures.

CMB emphasized in the report that it will continue to improve its refined risk management strategy for the consumer credit business. The bank will maintain differentiated customer selection standards before loan issuance, focusing on quality customers with stable long-term incomes while continuously expanding data sources and rapidly upgrading risk assessment strategies. It will also strengthen post-loan monitoring, enrich monitoring dimensions, upgrade its models to improve the accuracy of risk identification and closely track changes in customer risk profiles through big data-driven quantitative risk control technologies.

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CHINA

Swan haven



A mute swan forages and frolics with several cygnets at Beilong Lake wetland park in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on Sunday, creating a lively early summer scene that attracted many curious citizens. Since the migration of seven mute swans in 2019, the park has become home to about 120 of the elegant birds, including seven nests of newly hatched cygnets this spring. HAN ZHANGYUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Military official emphasizes innovation, self-reliance

By **JIANG CHENGLONG**
jiangchenglong@chinadaily.com.cn

A senior official at one of China's top military universities has called for stronger efforts in emerging and frontier technologies to secure breakthroughs in core technologies and "fundamentally reverse dependence on others".

Zhang Zhan, political commissar of the National University of Defense Technology, made the remarks in an article published on Wednesday in Study Times, a newspaper administered by the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

He said China should integrate high-quality innovation resources and strengths to achieve that goal, noting that the country is facing a severe and complex innovation environment and security situation in high-tech fields.

Zhang said China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) outlines the need to accelerate the building of strategic capabilities in emerging fields and promote the efficient integration and mutual reinforcement of new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities.

He said this is a major step to "address complex security threats and secure national strategic advantages", and an important guarantee for achieving the centenary goal of the People's Liberation Army on schedule.

A new round of technological and military revolutions is accelerating worldwide, Zhang said, noting that emerging technologies such as quantum information and bio-interdisciplinary technologies are making breakthroughs in multiple areas, driving the reorganization of global resources, the reshaping of economic structures and changes in the military landscape.

"We must firmly seize the opportunity, build on the momentum, coordinate and allocate resources from all sides, and advance deployment and development in emerging fields," he said.

The senior official called for the vigorous development of new industries, forms of business, models and capabilities in frontier and emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum information, aerospace science and technology, and deep-earth and deep-sea exploration, in order to continuously strengthen the country's economic and defense capabilities.

Zhang also highlighted the importance of supplying high-end talent, calling for integrated development of education, science and technology, and talent cultivation in emerging fields.

He suggested optimizing disciplines and talent training models in line with scientific and technological innovation, industrial development and national strategic needs in emerging fields.

China should accelerate the development of basic, emerging and interdisciplinary disciplines in key areas such as integrated circuits, AI, new energy and new materials, he said.

He also encouraged enterprises to increase investment in basic research in emerging fields and improve their participation and influence in major scientific and technological innovation decision-making for the country and the military.

Separately, the Chinese navy has recently commissioned several types of new warplanes that can be integrated into the combat system of aircraft carrier groups, drawing widespread attention on Chinese social media.

The aircraft include stealth carrier-based fighter jets, multipurpose catapult-launched carrier-based fighter jets, fixed-wing carrier-based early warning aircraft, fixed-wing electronic warfare aircraft and anti-submarine helicopters.

Defense Ministry spokesman Jiang Bin said at an online news briefing on Saturday that the new aircraft are an important part of building systematic combat capabilities for aircraft carrier groups and a major achievement in the Chinese navy's accelerated transformation.

Since entering the new era, the modernization of the Chinese navy has advanced steadily and rapidly, he said.

From the air to underwater, and from near seas to far seas, various weapons platforms have continued to improve in type and function, providing stronger support for safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, Jiang said.

"Whether in escort missions in the Gulf of Aden, international humanitarian rescue, or the hospital ships' Mission Harmony operations, practice has proved that a strong Chinese navy is always an anchor of peace and a bridge of cooperation for the world," he said.

China is ready to work with the navies of other countries to make new and greater contributions to maritime security and world peace, Jiang added.

Taiji gravitational wave program makes breakthrough

A Chinese research team has announced a key breakthrough in the space-based gravitational wave detection program named Taiji, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Mechanics.

The team designed a full-function interferometer optical bench for the Taiji program, constructed a first-generation Taiji interferometer OB and ground test system, and conducted preliminary testing and calibration.

The research program Taiji aims to study gravitational waves from the merging of binary black holes and other celestial bodies, according to the institute.

The full-function interferometer OB can effectively mitigate interference from temperature fluctuations in the measurement. Boasting picometer-level measurement accuracy, it can detect tiny variations equivalent to one ten-thousandth of the diameter of a human hair, the research team said.

Also, tests show that the equipment's noise level has been greatly reduced and its measurement stability has been enhanced tenfold, with key indicators fully meeting the requirements for the Taiji-2 mission, according to the research.

The relevant findings were recently published in the international academic journal Research, providing technical support for China's future space-based gravitational-wave detection.

CAS set out a three-step strategy to implement the Taiji program. Taiji-1, China's first satellite in the program, was launched in August 2019 and has been performing well in orbit, according to the institute.

XINHUA

Experts mull over AI role in education

Digital conference participants agree tech cannot replace human qualities

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Leading officials and experts gathered in Hangzhou on Monday for the 2026 World Digital Education Conference to discuss how artificial intelligence is reshaping learning, while emphasizing that it cannot replace human qualities such as moral judgment, creativity and social interaction.

Themed "AI+ Education: Transformation, Development and Governance", the two-day event aims to build an open and inclusive global dialogue platform and promote consensus on AI governance in education.

In his opening address, Vice-President Han Zheng said China has implemented a national strategy on digital education, accelerating the transformation of education through digital technologies and sharing high-quality digital education resources with learners around the world. China is also working with all parties to build a fairer, more inclusive and more sustainable global digital education ecosystem, he said.

Han noted that the integration of digital technologies such as AI with education represents both a major opportunity for global education development and a common challenge for all countries.

China stands ready to work with all sides to explore the vision and governance approaches for digital education, improve rules and standards and jointly promote the transformation and innovation of digital education, he said.

Han made four suggestions: first, a people-centered approach that stays true to the essence of education; second, inclusive and equitable access that ensures education is accessible to all; third, AI for good with safe and orderly development, ensuring AI truly serves learners' holistic growth; and fourth, open collaboration to promote mutual learning among civilizations.

The United Kingdom's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Olivia Bailey said the UK government is determined to ensure AI safety supports teachers. "AI and tech must also earn the trust of parents," she said.

Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said AI can help students acquire knowledge, master skills and broaden thinking, but it cannot replace the ability to tell right from wrong, address conflicts or shoulder responsibilities. Nor can it replace physical exercise, labor practice or social interaction, he added. "The more AI evolves, the more precious human-specific qualities become," he said.

Huai also posed a fundamental question: when machines may surpass humans in learning and memory, and knowledge shifts from scarcity to abundance, where does human wisdom originate? "Knowledge matters, but cultivating wisdom and innovation matters more. Knowledge can be copied, but thinking cannot; answers can be generated, but creativity cannot," he said.

John Michael Kosterlitz, a Nobel laureate in physics and professor at Brown University and Soochow University, gave an example of his granddaughter using ChatGPT to solve geometry problems. "AI can present several ways of thinking about the same problem — it's very powerful," he said. However, he expressed concerns about plagiarism and assessment, noting that with AI, a student's homework may be partly or entirely written by a machine, making detection difficult. "If AI changes learning, we must also reconsider assessment," he added.

Kosterlitz noted that AI is becoming part of the discovery process itself, as seen in recent Nobel prizes in physics and chemistry. This prompts a larger question: "If machines become better at calculation, explanation and discovery, what should we learn to do best? My answer is this — we must become more responsible in judgment, ethics, imagination and purpose."



Guests attend an exhibition on digital education achievements during the 2026 World Digital Education Conference, which opened in Hangzhou on Monday. LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Meteorologists warn of hotter, wetter summer ahead

By **LI MENGHAN**
limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

China is expected to experience higher-than-average temperatures during the upcoming flood season, with a precipitation pattern characterized by flooding in the north and drought in the south — trends that warrant attention but not excessive concern against the backdrop of global warming, meteorologists said.

According to the National Climate Center, temperatures across large parts of the country will be higher than normal from June to August, with highs exceeding 35 C, especially in southern China and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Floods and droughts are expected across different regions during this period. Areas such as Hebei, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan provinces, as well as Beijing and Tianjin, are predicted to receive 20 to 50 percent more precipitation than usual, with the potential for extreme heavy rainfall and flood disasters. Meanwhile, periodic drought conditions may affect Hubei and Hunan provinces, as well as Chongqing and Xinjiang.

Responding to recent online assertions that 2026 will see "the hottest summer with persistent extreme heat across large areas", Chen Lijuan, a senior forecaster at the National Climate Center, said such claims are exaggerated and that subjective expressions like "collapsing heat" have unnecessarily fueled public anxiety.

Chen said above-average temperatures do not indicate an uncontrollable situation, as heat waves are limited in both space and time. Some areas in northern China, for instance, are expected to experience high-temperature days in early summer, while southern China will see notable heat and drought in midsummer. During those periods, there may still be occasional cooling spells or rainfall events.

This aligns with recent weather forecasts, which suggest a periodic heat wave.

Cities in the provinces of Shandong, Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hebei are expected to experience maximum temperatures above 35 C between May 9 and 13. If the forecast proves accurate, the high temperatures will arrive more than 10 days earlier than average. However, a cold spell is expected to interrupt the heat later this week.

El Nino factor

Zheng Fei, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said high temperatures and precipitation patterns expected over the next three months are part of the broader trend of global warming.

"While this is expected, it still requires attention, as the global average surface temperature increased around 0.6 C over the past century, with a 0.24 C rise in 2023 alone," he said.

Zheng said the potential development of El Nino conditions could be a major factor influencing climate patterns from June to August.

El Nino — a climate phenomenon marked by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific — is highly likely to emerge this month, contributing to rising global average temperatures. It is expected to bring a slightly stronger-than-normal East Asian summer monsoon and a more intense western Pacific subtropical high extending farther west and north, resulting in increased moisture transport from the ocean and pushing the rain belt farther north.

"The El Nino event is expected to intensify during summer and autumn, reach moderate-to-strong intensity, peak this winter and then weaken the following spring. However, the probability of it developing into a super El Nino — comparable to the extreme events of 1997 or 2015 — is only about 10 percent," Zheng said.

"It is currently predicted that the global mean surface temperature in 2026 will be between 1.43 C and 1.52 C above preindustrial levels, and it is highly likely to exceed 2025 levels, ranking among the top three warmest years since 1850," he said.

Notably, El Nino typically affects regions around the tropical Pacific first, with its thermal effects taking several months to reach Asia. Therefore, "the global mean surface temperature is predicted to reach a record high in 2027, making it the warmest year on record," Zheng said.

Cheng Lijing, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, also warned of more frequent and extreme weather disasters associated with El Nino, as substantial heat accumulated in the eastern tropical Pacific is released through evaporation and atmospheric circulation during such events.

"Weather disasters in recent years have been characterized by high intensity and short duration, so the possibility of destructive severe convective weather, like the heavy rainstorm in Beijing in 2025, cannot be ruled out," Cheng said.

Although such weather events remain extremely difficult to predict, the monitoring network is being continuously improved with artificial intelligence-driven technology, enabling more accurate forecasts, earlier warnings and better preparedness, he said.

"Therefore, the public need not be overly concerned," he added.

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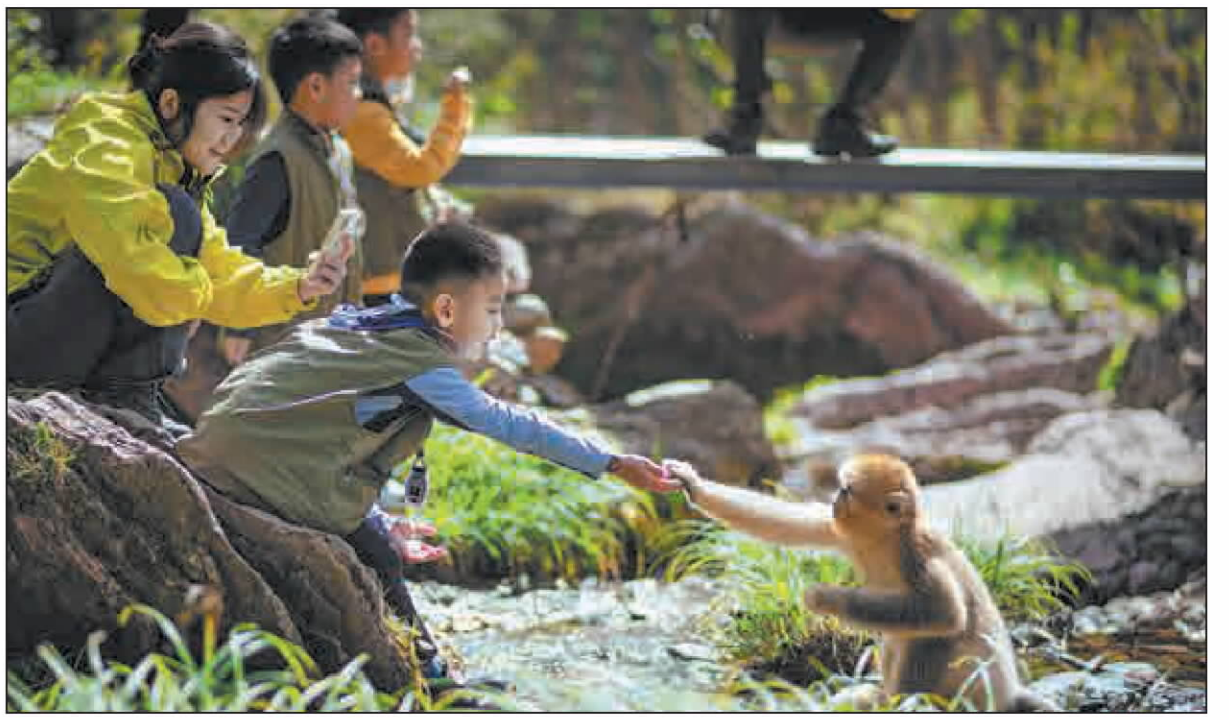
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Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Shennongjia's monkeys make golden return

Caretakers help in bringing secretive subspecies back from the brink

By LI MENGHAN
in Shennongjia, Hubei
limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn







Clockwise from top: A child interacts with a golden snub-nosed monkey at Dalongtan Golden Snub-nosed Monkey Research Base in Shennongjia, Hubei province, in September 2024. WANG CHUNYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY Researchers record monkeys' behavior at Shennongjia National Nature Reserve. LI SHUHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A researcher observes monkeys at the Dalongtan base in May 2024. LIU KANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Attracted by the caretaker's closed fist, a 65-centimeter-tall golden snub-nosed monkey swings gracefully through the branches of Shennongjia in Central China's Hubei province.

When the fist reveals nothing, the monkey — a 25-kilogram male named Beike (meaning "conch") — taps the caretaker and tugs at his sleeve. He eventually finds two peanuts in the other hand, swiftly seizing and cracking the rare treat.

"This monkey recently won a battle to become the new head of his family," said Yang Jingyuan, director of the scientific research institute at the Shennongjia National Nature Reserve. He looks on as dozens of monkeys dart through the canopy, grooming one another and occasionally tussling in the dappled sunlight.

After four decades of conservation, the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey, the rarest subspecies of the golden snub-nosed monkey, has bounced back from near invisibility.

Its population has tripled to 1,618 individuals across 11 groups, roaming a habitat of 401 square kilometers — a resurgence made possible by policy support, scientific management and technological empowerment.

The comeback

With a life span of around 20 to 25 years, the golden snub-nosed monkey is classified as a first-class State-protected wildlife species.

In 1978, the belief that golden snub-nosed monkeys did not inhabit Hubei due to the region's climate and geographical conditions was challenged when a group of Chinese scientists unexpectedly collected two specimens in Shennongjia.

In 1980, Professor Liu Minzhuang from East China Normal University in Shanghai confirmed the presence of golden snub-nosed monkeys in Shennongjia, extending the species' distribution eastward by around 500 km from Sichuan province into Hubei.

However, the discovery coincided with a period of severe deforestation and hunting. By the 1980s, the population of this subspecies had plummeted to just 501 individuals clinging to a mere 85 sq km of habitat. To stem the tide, Shennongjia was designated a provincial reserve in 1982 and upgraded to national status in 1986. In 2024, the subspecies was officially designated as an independent conservation management target, reflecting its unique genetic diversity and morphology, including its iconic upturned nose and a tail that often exceeds its body length.



A golden snub-nosed monkey breastfeeds her infants in Shennongjia, Hubei province. LI MENGHAN / CHINA DAILY

"The 2024 designation recognized both the culmination of decades-long field research and the species' protection value," caretaker Yang said. As early as 2005, scientists had selected one of the 11 groups — the very group that includes the family Beike now leads — as their focal study group for long-term behavioral and ecological monitoring.

At that time, the group had 105 individuals and inhabited a natural valley in Dalongtan, northeast Shennongjia. The group had a well-organized social structure of eight family units and one all-male unit.

Golden snub-nosed monkeys typically have a hierarchical social structure. Each group consists of dozens to hundreds of monkeys, organized into several family units and one or more all-male units. Each family unit is led by an adult male, who lives with its wives and kids. The all-male unit, made up of adult males who have lost their position as family head and those who have left their families after the age of four, is responsible for the security of the whole group and for training the younger males.

For close observation, researchers built simple living quarters, set up monitoring plank walks and established the Dalongtan Golden Snub-nosed Monkey Research Base in 2005. Through continuous tracking and observation, they identified winter food shortages as one of the key factors driving the population toward endangerment.

To address the problem, the research team conducted a diet supplement experiment, where apples, oranges and pine nuts were stuck onto branches and coated with moss to mimic wild fruits. But no monkey dared to approach — a stalemate that was finally broken when a male, later named Dadan (meaning "bold"), became the first to take the food.

A few months later, the monkey group began to regularly accept the supplemental food, which opened the door for researchers to systematically observe their feeding, reproduction, social behavior and even individual personalities.

Yao Hui, deputy director of the scientific research institute, said that the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey typically lives at altitudes above 1,600 meters, where vegetation is limited — about 60 percent of their diet is tree bark and lichen, supplemented by bird eggs, insects and soil for protein and trace elements.

"As a result, during winter when food intake is severely insufficient and nutrition is lacking, their fur turns grayish; around July and August, however, it becomes a beautiful golden color," Yao said.

Yao underscored that human intervention remains minimal — researchers only provide a small amount of supplemental food during extreme winter shortages. The overall approach is to let the monkeys live as naturally as possible while working to restore their natural habitat.

Measures included the construction of 25 ecological corridors, which facilitate the reconnection of fragmented habitat patches and promote gene exchange among different monkey populations. Additionally, more than 20 sq km of degraded habitat has been restored to expand their living area.

For residents living in areas where the monkeys are distributed, the reserve has relocated them and organized skills training to help them transition to new livelihoods. Training programs focus on ecotourism, herbal medicine cultivation and green agriculture, empowering former forest dwellers to step out of the deep mountains and embrace sustainable lives.

For those living in peripheral regions, they receive alternative energy subsidies to replace coal and firewood with electricity, reducing the human impact on the monkeys' habitat. Additionally, a comprehensive electrification transformation project at the Dalongtan base was completed in 2024, with a large number of photovoltaic panels installed to power most daily needs such as cooking and heating. This initiative not only reduced fire risks but also further minimized human disturbance to the monkeys' habitat.

"Most rescue cases at the local rescue station are reported by villagers — a vivid microcosm of the shift from loggers to guardians," Yao said.

Tech empowerment

Peng Linpeng, director of the information management center at the Shennongjia reserve, highlighted the importance of a rounded, three-dimensional monitoring network for the recovery of the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey population.

Established in 2025, the network goes beyond regular patrols, integrating satellite remote sensing to monitor broad habitat changes like forest pests and diseases. Drones, being more precise and cost-effective, support routine comparative monitoring, deter illegal activities, and collect high-definition three-dimensional geographic data for emergency command and dispatch.

"Considering the species' lofty living requirements, we have set up water quality monitoring stations at the sources and outlets of rivers flowing into the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, as well as air quality monitoring stations at elevations ranging from 600 to 3,000 meters," Peng said, adding that highly sensitive smoke detectors have been installed to warn of fire risks.

For real-time wildlife tracking, high-altitude cameras equipped with artificial intelligence have been deployed, offering a detection range of up to 1,000 meters to automatically track, identify and record animals upon their appearance. Over 700 infrared cameras have been installed, with 50 of them capable of real-time transmission. Supplemented by acoustic detectors, monitoring has turned from manual tracking in the past to a highly efficient, precise and automated approach.

"All technological means are designed and deployed for the sole purpose of wildlife protection, rather than for purely academic research," Peng said.

As a flagship species, the recovery of the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey from the brink reflects the ecological prosperity of the reserve — which, with just 0.03 percent of the national land area, is home to more than one-tenth of China's vascular plant and vertebrate species — a thriving reality under the watchful eyes of caretakers, local villagers and cameras.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Yunnan model creates biological sanctuary for province's wildlife

By YAN YUJIE and **LI YINGQING**
in Kunming

A 21-year-old white-browed gibbon named Dingding has become the latest international face of China's conservation achievements. A video of the primate "chatting" with staff at the Taiyanghe National Forest Park recently garnered over 44 million views on global social media platforms, highlighting a burgeoning era of harmonious coexistence between humans and endangered species in Southwest China.

While the video touched netizens with its heartwarming interaction, experts say the scene is a microcosm of a much larger ecological shift in Yunnan province.

The tranquil life enjoyed by Dingding and his peers is underpinned by rigorous policy. During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Yunnan adopted the "forest chief" system, a centralized strategy that has established one of the country's most extensive wildlife protection networks.

According to the Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Administration, the province serves as a sanctuary for 928 key wild animal and plant species under State protection. At Taiyanghe, this protection translates into a sprawling 216.23-square-kilometer habitat with a forest coverage rate of 97.45 percent.

Taiyanghe has evolved into more than just a forest; it is a center for rescue and mutual healing. Among its residents is Yuanyuan, a white-cheeked gibbon whose presence is a testament to the vigilance of local forest police. After being rescued from life-threatening conditions in its early years, Yuanyuan now thrives alongside other rare species, such as Zhaocai and Jingbao — a pair of binturongs classified as national first-class protected wildlife.



White-browed gibbon Dingding sits on the head of Fu Ziqian, a worker at the Taiyanghe National Forest Park in Pu'er, Yunnan province. WANG YUEDING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The animals here enjoy being close to people because they feel secure," said Xu Yanfang, a staff member who works closely with "Princess" Nana, one of the park's rhinoceroses. "Working with them is a healing experience. It's a fascinating dynamic where the caretakers and the animals support each other's well-being."

The park's success is also visible in the longevity of its inhabitants. At 21, Dingding is considered an elderly gibbon, equivalent to over 90 human years. His playful interactions — insisting on being carried or demanding peeled grapes — reflect a level of care usually reserved for domestic seniors.

Fu Ziqian, a veteran staff member, noted that the dietary preferences of the animals often mirror the region's rich natural offerings. "Dingding enjoys local specialties like fish mint and gotu kola," Fu said. "It shows how well-integrated these animals are into the local Yunnan ecosystem."

The conservation effort has moved beyond government agencies and into the hearts of the public. Supporters like 42-year-old Wang Xueyun travel hundreds of kilometers from Xishuangbanna every month to bring fresh fruit to the gibbons.

"I wish for Dingding, Shanshan and Yuanyuan to remain healthy," Wang said. "I hope the other animals can live freely and happily on this land."

As Yunnan prepares to transition into future conservation frameworks, the high-definition cameras and livestreamed sessions led by young operators like 23-year-old Lou Zihan ensure that the message of protection reaches a global audience. For Lou, the mischievous antics of the binturongs she monitors are not just content for social media, but proof that China's "green revolution" is working — one nuzzle at a time.

Contact the writers at yanyj@chinadaily.com.cn

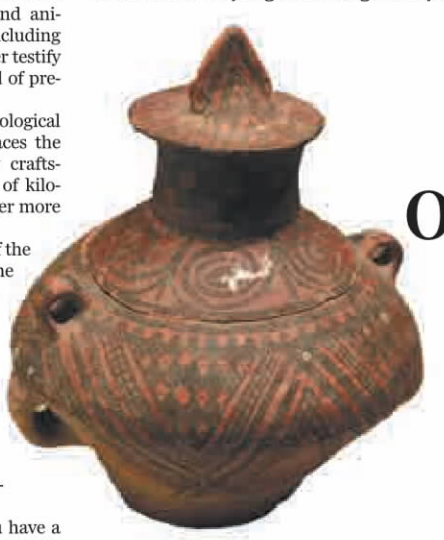
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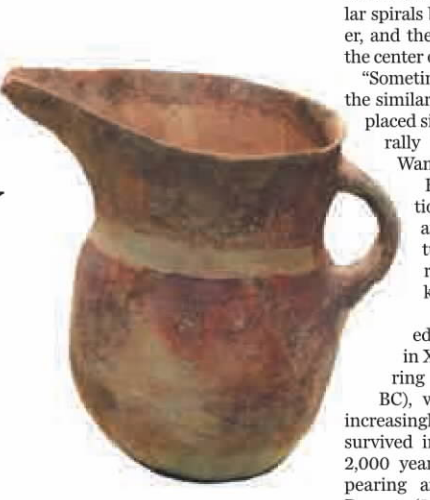
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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Above: Pottery items demonstrating the westward spread of prehistoric craftsmanship from the Yellow River Basin to today's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region are on show. **Below:** A pottery jar (left) from the Siba culture, in Gansu province, and a Bronze Age pottery jar unearthed in Xinjiang are among the objects on display. PHOTOS BY FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY





The journey of painted clay

Exhibition reveals how prehistoric ceramic traditions traveled to shape early civilization, report **Fang Aiqing** and **Mao Weihua** in Urumqi.

Thousands of years ago, Neolithic painted pottery culture from the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River traveled westward along the Hexi Corridor — in today's Gansu province — before spreading across the northern and southern foothills of the Tianshan Mountains in what is now the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. Here, it blended with local traditions and continued radiating further west.

Artifacts demonstrating this remarkable journey are on display in an exhibition that opened on April 10 at the Xinjiang Museum.

The exhibition, *From the Yellow River Basin to Tianshan Mountains: Tracing the Westward Journey of Prehistoric Painted Pottery*, features 175 sets of pottery from the collections of the Gansu Provincial Museum, Xinjiang Museum, and 13 other cultural heritage institutions across the two provincial-level regions. The exhibition, running through July 10, was previously displayed at the Gansu museum.

Against ocher and reddish-brown surfaces, ancient craftspeople expressed extraordinary creativity.

Delicate geometric grids, flowing spirals, fish motifs, petals and abstract deity patterns reveal a striking command of line and form. Elegantly curved vessels and animal-shaped decorations, including eagle and goat heads, further testify to the imagination and skill of prehistoric artisans.

Based on years of archaeological findings, the exhibition traces the spread of painted pottery craftsmanship across thousands of kilometers from east to west over more than 3,000 years.

Wang Nannan, director of the exhibition department at the Gansu Provincial Museum and one of the exhibition's curators, says Gansu and Xinjiang are geographically linked and share deep cultural roots, exemplified by the westward expansion of painted pottery culture, which carried early people's aesthetic ideals and passion for life.

Both Xinjiang and Gansu have a significant east-west expanse: Xinjiang stretches nearly 2,000 kilometers and Gansu about 1,500 km.

The upper reaches of the Yellow River flow some 900 km in eastern Gansu. To the west, the long and narrow Hexi Corridor — "Hexi" means "west of the Yellow River" in Chinese — has served, since ancient times, as a key route linking the Central Plains with the country's western regions and beyond.

Wang notes that the prehistoric routes of painted pottery transmission through the Hexi Corridor largely overlapped with the ancient Silk Road, as both relied on the same geographical artery.

Building on this geographical and archaeological reality, scholars have named the east-to-west expansion of early Chinese culture — represented by painted pottery — the "Painted Pottery Road".

Han Jianye, professor at the School of History, Renmin University of China, has studied this topic for years and published a collection of essays on it.

According to Han, painted pottery from present-day Shaanxi and Gansu provinces spread westward from the 4th to the 1st millennium BC. Divided by the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the routes branched into a northern path — spreading to Central Asia and beyond via Xinjiang — and a southern path toward the Kashmir region.

"The Painted Pottery Road was the primary channel for early cultural exchanges between China and the West and can be regarded as a precursor to the Silk Road," he writes.

The ongoing pottery exhibition highlights the evolution of painted patterns and vessel shapes, offering a visual thread for understanding this westward transmission.

The middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River were among the birthplaces of prehistoric painted pottery. At the Dadiwan archaeological site in Qin'an county, eastern Gansu, archaeologists have unearthed pottery dating back around 8,000 years. These vessels are typically round-bottomed, or tripod bowls decorated with red bands around the rim, with pigments usually applied before firing. They are among the earliest decorated pottery discovered in China.

Between 7,000 and 5,000 years ago, the Yangshao culture flourished in the Central Plains. Its pottery featured black-painted patterns of straight lines, geometric shapes, fish, petals, and leaves. Around 5,500 years ago, its iconic petal patterns — seen on Miaodigou-type pottery of the mid-Yangshao period — had already spread across much of present-day Gansu and eastern Qinghai provinces.

In eastern Gansu, Yangshao traditions evolved into the Majiayao culture, which thrived some 5,300 to 4,000 years ago. During this period, painted pottery reached an artistic peak.

On display at the exhibition are pieces featuring exquisitely intricate patterns such as lozenges, spirals, gourd-shaped grids, birds and deities, which cover the entire vessels.

During the late Majiayao period, painted pottery — along with the agricultural culture that produced and used it — kept advancing into multiple regions.

The branch that extended toward the Hexi Corridor developed into the Siba culture. Dating back around 3,900 to 3,400 years, it marked the transition from the Neolithic period to the Bronze Age. Its western reach stretched to the Hami Basin in eastern Xinjiang, where it interacted with the local Tianshanbeilu culture.

Double-handled jars unearthed from the Tianshanbeilu cemetery site feature hanging straps and large grid patterns similar to those found in Siba culture pottery. Square spirals and fret motifs seen on late Majiayao and Siba wares also appear in Iron Age relics discovered in Hami.

Around 3,000 years ago, painted pottery flourished in central Xinjiang cultures, including Subeixi in the Turpan Basin and Chawuhu, mainly distributed in the Bayingolin Mongolian autonomous prefecture. Artifacts from these areas provide evidence of eastern influences and local adaptation.

The small-mouthed, bulging-bellied design of Subeixi single-handled jars retained the influence of the Yellow River Basin. At the Chawuhu ancient tomb complex, pottery with red paint on a light background featured a bottom design better suited for hanging and carrying, reflecting the needs of nomadic life.

In Xinjiang, many vessels were found with a *liu* (spout) for easy and smooth pouring.

Wang notes that compared with Yangshao and Majiayao pottery, Xinjiang's prehistoric ceramics featured simpler decorative patterns but more practical functions.

"As painted pottery spread westward, the vessels became smaller but more practical," he says, adding that this change reflected adaptation and integration — evidence of the strong inclusiveness of Chinese civilization.

He explains that the exhibition is organized around geographical nodes, allowing visitors to easily trace the deep connections between ancient communities in Xinjiang and the Central Plains. For example, visitors can observe striking similarities between two single-handled vessels — one from a late Majiayao site in Gansu and another from Bronze Age remains in Xinjiang.

The late Majiayao piece is barrel-shaped, with the handle attached near the top. Its upper part outlines triangular layouts with bold lines, set apart by three horizontal lines, while the lower part features vertical zigzag patterns.

The Xinjiang artifact, on the other hand, has triangular patterns above horizontal dividing lines and circular spirals below; its body is rounder, and the handle is positioned at the center of one side.

"Sometimes it's hard to describe the similarities in words, but when placed side by side, one can naturally feel the resemblance," Wang says.

He adds that the exhibition presents a complete and tangible chain of cultural transmission that requires little specialist knowledge to appreciate.

It is believed that painted pottery began to decline in Xinjiang around the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), with patterns becoming increasingly cursory. This art form survived in the region for nearly 2,000 years before almost disappearing after the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

Li Zheng, director of the Xinjiang Museum's exhibition department and another curator of the exhibition, says the emergence, spread, and development of painted pottery fully demonstrate Xinjiang's important role in the cultural development of Chinese civilization.

"Although these artifacts were scattered across a vast expanse along the Painted Pottery Road, they shared similar aesthetics and craftsmanship," Li says.

"The routes connected the Yellow River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains in a millennia-long dialogue, vividly illustrating how Chinese civilization is diverse yet unified, continuous, and enduring," he adds.

The exhibition will travel to Bayingolin and later to Hami.

Marbuya Abdureyim contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Yangshao discovery fills gap in Shanxi history

By **DENG ZHANGYU**
dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn





From left: Wang Shuang, an archaeologist, identifies an ash pit belonging to the Neolithic Yangshao culture in Yirang village, Yangquan, Shanxi province; an uncovered pottery shard preserves distinctive red grid patterns. PHOTOS BY LIU SHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Archaeologists working in the dusty fields of Yirang village, Yangquan, in North China's Shanxi province, have uncovered a major discovery that offers fresh insight into the region's Neolithic past.

In March, a small team of researchers used traditional Luoyang spades — long-handled tools designed to extract soil samples — to probe the earth. Among the soil layers, they recovered fragments of painted pottery, weathered but clearly marked with distinctive red grid patterns.

According to Han Lizhong, director of the Yangquan Archaeological Research Center, these fragments date to the late Yangshao culture, a Neolithic civilization that flourished along the middle reaches of the Yellow River roughly 7,000 to 5,000 years ago. The culture is famous for its painted pottery, often decorated with geometric motifs and occasional human or animal figures.

This marks the first confirmed discovery of a Yangshao culture site in Yangquan.

"It fills a gap in the region's Middle Neolithic cultural record, expands the known distribution of the Yangshao culture, and demonstrates close cultural exchanges between Yangquan and areas that are now Jinzhong in Shanxi as well as parts of Henan," says Han.

The site lies on the northern bank of the Taohe River, where local farmers had previously uncovered ancient stone axes. "Our ancestors would have found this spot ideal for settlement," Han adds.

Han recalls that archaeologists had surveyed the area several times since the 1990s without success. That changed in March when researchers stumbled upon painted pottery fragments near a newly dug grave. As they expanded their search, they found layers containing pottery from different periods, including pits dating to the Yangshao era.

The site now covers an area of approximately 129,000 square meters — roughly the size of 20 football fields.

"When the first painted shard was found, everyone almost jumped for joy," says Wang Shuang, one of the six field team members. Over the past months, the team repeatedly trekked across hills and valleys, studying the terrain and interviewing villagers for clues about possible artifacts.

The archaeological survey began in November 2024 as part of a special initiative to explore Yangquan's early cultures.

So far, the team has identified three ash pits and one kiln, along with a remarkably continuous cultural sequence spanning the Yangshao culture, Longshan culture, Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC), Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC), and Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BC).

In Yirang village, time appears layered in the earth: painted pottery from 5,000 years ago, black Longshan pottery from 4,000 years ago, and Shang and Zhou pottery from 3,000 years ago. Together, they reveal a settlement that appears to have remained inhabited for thousands of years without interruption.

Han says Yirang village has a long history, with multiple cultural relic sites still visible. In October 2024, the team had already excavated two Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) tombs there, and recovered 34 artifacts. The current survey, launched the following month, aims to systematically investigate the region's early cultural layers.

The recovered artifacts include pottery, stone tools and bone-and-shell objects. Painted pottery makes up a high proportion, with fine red grid-and-band patterns. Researchers have also identified vessel forms, such as bowls, jars and basins, alongside smaller objects including pottery rings and perforated shell knives.

By comparing these artifacts with discoveries from similar sites, archaeologists have preliminarily dated the settlement to the late Yangshao period.

"The discovery of remains here from the Yangshao culture, Longshan culture, Xia and Shang dynasties, and Eastern Zhou periods establishes a continuous cultural sequence from the Neolithic era onward," Han says.

"It provides valuable clues for understanding the evolution and development of prehistoric societies in the Taihang Mountains."

Zhu Xingxin in Shanxi province contributed to this story.

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LIFE

Tang canal rises as a glowing destination

Once the cradle of China's industrial revolution, site gets a makeover, turning it into a hub of tourism and tradition, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Tangshan.



The boat glides slowly along the Tangjin Canal, a waterway that once connected the industrial cities of Tangshan in Hebei province and Tianjin. On either side, hundreds of Tang Dynasty-styled lanterns rise in formation, their crimson glow chasing away the last chill of an April evening as it illuminates the countless bricks and latticed windows lining the streets.

A massive Ferris wheel with playful expressions flashing across its digital screen looms ahead. The air is filled with the distant melody of Pingju Opera, a centuries-old folk tradition born in this very region.

For a moment, it is easy to believe you have traveled back in time to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), an era celebrated as the golden age of Chinese art, culture and cosmopolitan ambition.

But this is not Xi'an in Shaanxi province, the ancient capital most associated with the Tang. It is Hetou Laojie (Hetou Old Street), a water town in the city, better known as a cradle of China's modern industrial revolution.

And, just a few years ago, this waterway was silent.

"Please lower your head," boat guide Shi Jia gently cautions her guests as the vessel approaches a low bridge adorned with a glowing light belt.

It is a practical safety reminder. But for the creative team behind the old street, it has become something of a metaphor.

After more than a decade of lying "low" as a lackluster commercial project, this place has raised its head, blossoming into one of the most dazzling nighttime tourism destinations in the province.

In 2025, the street welcomed 8 million visitors, with a single day reaching 166,000. On a typical Monday night in April, the street is crowded with travelers as if it were a holiday.

Since opening in 2023, it has been recognized as a national tourist and leisure street and received the 2025 China Cultural Tourism Pioneer Award from the China Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

The 2,000-*mu* (133-hectare) site is the result of a partnership between the Fengnan district government and Kaige'er Group, a local cultural tourism enterprise. It now offers a fully immersive Tang experience, where visitors can eat, stroll, shop, and watch performances in a meticulously re-created historical atmosphere.

As the boat continues its journey, passengers pass multiple performance installations along the banks, where singers, dancers, acrobats, and actors in Tang-era costumes create vivid scenes that unfold as a scroll painting brought to life.

"The performers are inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, and they perform to audiences' reactions," Shi emphasizes.

She often recommends her guests stay for a short Pingju Opera performance, which originated from Tangshan.

In addition to the dynamic performance, the giant lanterns are eye-catching, each standing about 7 meters tall and featuring patterns from *The Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers*, a Tang Dynasty painting now housed in the Liaoning Provincial Museum.

About half an hour's drive from Hetou Old Street, Tangshan Feast, also known as the Tangshan Food Culture Museum, pleases the palate of even the most discerning gourmand.

The 40,000-square-meter indoor complex features 150 varieties of Tangshan snacks and more than 20 types of foods crafted with intangible cultural heritage skills, all spread across "five streets, two alleys, and one river" on its ground floor.

"Tangshan Feast is what we call 'an edible museum'," says Wang Caitong, a guide at the complex.

"It was originally a disused shopping mall. The creative team reshaped the space and built a 'super scene' with cultural tourism appeal — small bridges, flowing water, pavilions, towers, and the hustle and bustle of traffic," she adds.

In 2025, it attracted 5.5 million visitors, 70 percent of whom came from outside Tangshan. On its busiest day, it welcomed 50,000 people.

Old wooden houses, some more than a century old, have been dismantled and reassembled here. In re-creations of some "grandpa" or "grandma" shops, elderly artisans demonstrate traditional crafts.

"We collected six century-old houses from the countryside," Wang says. "Every brick and tile carries the trace of time. These scenes are designed to evoke childhood memories and to make people feel something."

On the second floor, a replica of Xiaoshan'er, a commercial district that once rivaled Beijing's Dashilar and Tianjin's Quanyechang in the 1930s, has been rebuilt.





From top: One of the highlights of a night show at Hetou Old Street in Tangshan, Hebei province, features performers suspended from cables, gliding across the sky on mechanical phoenixes while molten iron showers down around them. Acrobatic performances have helped transform Hetou Old Street into a bustling tourist destination. A giant Ferris wheel draws visitors taking in the view during a nighttime boat ride along the canal in Tangshan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Literally meaning "Little Hill", Xiaoshan'er rose to prominence in the late 19th century as the northern terminus of the Tangxu (Tangshan-Xugezhuang) Railway, China's first standard-gauge railway. A commercial explosion then ensued, with department stores, bathhouses, theaters, teahouses, and restaurants packed into just a 500-meter-long stretch.

"In those days, if you came to Tangshan and didn't visit Xiaoshan'er, you hadn't really been to Tangshan," she says.

Every snack at Tangshan Feast has a story. For instance, *gezha*, a mung-bean pancake, is said to have been named by the Empress Dowager Cixi.

"The Empress had a habit of taking at most two bites of any dish. When she tried *gezha*, she liked it so much that she took a second bite and said '*ge zhe*' — meaning 'set it aside'. The eunuch thought she was naming the dish — and the name stuck," Wang recounts.

The "Fourteenth Prince" dry-braised chicken derives its name from Emperor Kangxi's 14th son, who was sent to guard the Qing tombs in Tangshan.

"He didn't have much appetite until the palace chef took a local dry-braised chicken recipe and combined it with imperial roast chicken techniques. The prince ate with great pleasure, and the dish has been passed down for 300 years," Wang says.

The success of Hetou Old Street and Tangshan Feast did not happen in a vacuum. They are the products of a deliberate, province-wide strategy to turn Hebei into a weekend destination for the 110 million people living in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

For years, Hebei was overlooked by tourists despite being home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites and containing all seven major landform types, notes Wang Rongli, deputy director of the Hebei provincial department of culture and tourism.

That began to change in 2022, when Hebei launched a strategic push to become the "weekend leisure destination of choice" for residents of Beijing and Tianjin. The slogan, "So close, so beautiful — spend your weekend in Hebei", was elevated to a provincial development strategy.

But traffic comes and goes quickly. "For a brand to last, it must rely on products and services," Wang emphasizes.

Since 2023, Hebei has become one of the first provinces to offer free expressway for tour buses traveling on weekends and public holidays. By 2025, the policy had saved tour operators more than 510 million yuan ($75 million) and covered more than 3.4 million buses, local authorities report.

"The fee reduction isn't large for any single tourist, but it sends a signal that Hebei genuinely welcomes you, and we're even willing to save you the tolls," she explains.

The province has also launched a luggage delivery service called "Easy Hebei Tour", allowing visitors to check in their bags at Beijing West Railway Station and find them already waiting at their Hebei hotel.

"The most durable, most powerful, and most cost-effective marketing is always word-of-mouth," Wang says.

Midway through Hetou Old Street, the night erupts. Along a stretch of the canal transformed into a battlefield, six former fishing boats have been refashioned into Tang Dynasty warships. On and around them, more than 500 performers charge on horseback, spin towering flags, and hurl themselves into staged combat.

From both ends of the canal, actors suspended from cables glide across the night on mechanical phoenixes, their robes streaming behind them as they pass through cascades of molten iron. The iron, heated to 1,600 C, is flung by hand against a brick wall, a thousand-year-old folk tradition called *da tie hua*. It explodes into a blizzard of white-orange sparks that rain down over the water, the boats and the upturned faces of the crowd.

For Shi Jia, the boat guide, the performance captures something essential about Hetou Old Street.

"For 12 years, this place was nothing. Now people come from Shanghai and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, just to see this," she says.

The low bridges are still there. So is her warning: "Please lower your head." But when the phoenixes fly, no one is looking down.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Female storyteller carries forward invaluable cultural legacy

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa



Nestled in the high-altitude pastures of Tsonyi county in Nagchu, Xizang autonomous region, Sinchung's life has been one of courage, resilience, and an unyielding commitment to preserving an ancient cultural legacy.

A female storyteller of King Gesar — a rarity in itself — Sinchung has overcome social challenges and geographical relocations to bridge the mythical Tibetan hero king, Gesar, with modern-day audiences.

Born to a nomadic family reliant on herding yaks and sheep, storytelling formed an integral part of Sinchung's childhood. Though King Gesar storytellers were virtually absent in her community, inspiration came closer to home through her father, himself a King Gesar storyteller.

King Gesar is a legendary figure in Tibetan culture, immortalized in the *Epic of King Gesar*.

"When herding together, my father would narrate the fascinating tales of King Gesar," recalled Sinchung. "The stories captivated me so much, I memorized them after hearing them just once."

It was from these herding expeditions that her love for the epic began to take root. By the age of 12, she would hum verses to herself, unaware of their meaning at times, yet deeply influenced by the themes of heroism and spirituality.

A turning point came when Sinchung's mother took in a blind, childless elderly woman.

"This grandmother would often share proverbs and folktales with me, leaving a lasting impression that prepared me for storytelling later in life," she says.

Curiosity about the epic grew further during her teenage years as her family owned a cherished copy of *Horse Race Norbu Chadun*, a King Gesar book.

Unable to read the Tibetan language at the time, Sinchung would pore over the book's illustrations, feeling a personal connection to the legendary characters. "Although I couldn't read, the images felt alive — like family members I had yet to meet," she says.

Determined to learn, Sinchung taught herself the Tibetan alphabet at 14. Scribbling letters into the sand while tending to livestock, she grew proficient over the years.

Reading books about King Gesar became a natural progression, even as she faced skepticism from her community.

"At first, elders appreciated my storytelling, but others mocked me or insisted that such tales were not meant to be sung by a woman," says Sinchung, describing challenges that ranged from societal taboos to outright hostility.

"Some even cursed my family, warning of disastrous consequences," she says.

For a time, the criticism silenced her. Public storytelling stopped, but in solitude, she carried on, practicing Gesar's tales while herding. The process, she says, brought her solace and happiness during those trying years.



Left: Sinchung (third from right) was invited to present her storytelling of King Gesar at an art performance show in Sinpori, Gongkar county, Xizang autonomous region in 2025. **Right:** Sinchung gets ready for her performance. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Between the ages of 17 and 25, Sinchung dove deeper into the epic. Borrowing books from other storytellers, she expanded her knowledge of the king's journey from his celestial birth and struggles on Earth to his victorious battles against enemies.

During this time, she endured mysterious illnesses that seemed to ebb only when she immersed herself in the poetic verses of King Gesar.

Her marriage at 26, followed by the responsibilities of family life, led to another hiatus. Storytelling took a backseat, especially under her husband's disapproval.

However, WeChat rekindled her passion, providing a new platform to share her art. Singing and rapping Gesar's tales in group chats garnered widespread recognition and won over audiences.

In 2020, Sinchung's family relocated to Sinpori, an ecological resettlement community in Xizang's Gongkar county, as part of a government program to improve the living conditions of high-altitude nomads.

The move to a more community-oriented environment gave her a new platform.

"With my neighbors living close by, it was easy to gather people for storytelling," says Sinchung. The teahouses of Sinpori welcomed her performances, and she eventually established a dedicated King Gesar Storytelling House.

Visitors from near and far listened to her accounts of the heroic king's exploits, bridging ancient glory and contemporary life.

However, Sinchung believes her storytelling alone is not enough to protect this intangible cultural treasure. Embarking on a new mission, she is documenting her knowledge in writing to ensure its preservation for future generations.

With government policies emphasizing the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, she found the encouragement she needed.

"By publishing books, I am ensuring that this invaluable cultural legacy doesn't perish with me," she says. "These stories will serve as an inheritance for future generations, enabling them to connect with and celebrate their identity."

Plans for additional publications are already in motion, ranging from collections of proverbs to compilations of Tibetan riddles.

For Sinchung, storytelling transcends entertainment; it is a living, breathing link to a storied past, and an enduring gift to posterity.

"If I live longer, I hope to contribute more. These stories are not just history, they're a part of us."

Contact the writers at palden_nyima@chinadaily.com.cn

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CULTURE



The curiosity and passion of actress Juliette Binoche

French star discusses her love of movies and China, **Xu Fan** and **Shi Futian** report.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Juliette Binoche, the French actress who served as jury president of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival's Tiantan Awards, shares her thoughts on cinema and her impressions of the country with China Daily. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Relaxed, easygoing, and always passionate about cinema — that sums up the first impressions of Juliette Binoche, the French screen legend who recently seized the spotlight in China as jury president of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival's Tiantan Awards.

At the climax of the festival's closing ceremony, Binoche walked onstage alongside iconic Chinese director Zhang Yimou to present the Best Feature Film award — one of the biggest Tiantan Awards — to the British film *Dragonfly*. In a sudden burst of energy, the 62-year-old actress slapped her trouser legs and exclaimed, "Let's find out who the winner is!" — a spontaneous gesture that drew applause from the audience.

After eight days of intense viewing and discussions, she and her six fellow jurors, including French-Vietnamese director Tran Anh Hung and British composer Simon Franglen, voted on 10 awards in total from 16 shortlisted films, selected from a record 1,826 submissions spanning 139 countries and regions.

"I felt great. We watched all the films. I almost forgot I was the jury president, because I was so in touch with the films. I forgot myself," Binoche said, describing her experience.

The festival also reflected the industry's growing preoccupation with artificial intelligence, establishing an AIGC Unit — the first of its kind in the world to focus on AI-generated films. This year, the section received nearly 2,840 submissions from 14 countries and regions — an 89 percent increase from the previous year.

Binoche is unworried about the emergence of AI in filmmaking, believing that it is simply a new tool and that plot and characterization are still the most important aspects.

"At the end of the day, AI is a way of telling a story. When you watch a film, it stays in your mind, heart and body somehow. Technique is just there to help the story. You have to go back to the core of making a film."

For Binoche — the first figure in cinema history to have won Best Actress honors at all three major European festivals: Venice, Berlin and Cannes — enthusiasm remains central to her approach to cinema. Fame and success, it seems, have never dulled her curiosity.

In an interview a few days before the closing ceremony, she discussed the jury's task with China Daily. "What we're trying to do in the festival is to find a diamond of a film — something that people have never seen before. It can be the story, the way it's done, or the acting — but it's something that is going to enrich the viewers and take them somewhere they've never been before."

That search for the unfamiliar has guided her through a remarkable range of collaborations over an acting career spanning more than 40 years: Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), in which she played a woman undone by grief; British filmmaker Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* (1996), where she portrayed a dynamic army nurse; and Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom's *Chocolat* (2000), starring her as a single mother skilled at making chocolate.

Binoche also worked with the late director Hou Hsiao-hsien on *Flight of the Red Balloon*, a 2007 film recounting the story of a French family through the eyes of a Chinese student.



Above: Binoche and director Zhang Yimou present the Best Feature Film award to the British movie *Dragonfly* during the festival's closing ceremony. **Below:** Several of Binoche's films have been aired on China Movie Channel, captivating local fans.



In an attempt to accurately portray the role — a harried single mother who runs a small avant-garde puppet theater and performs all the voices — Binoche devoted a full month to preparation. She took classes at a puppet theater, underwent voice training, and even suggested dyeing her hair blonde.

She recalled that Hou once asked her to bring personal objects from her own home to the set, so that the space would feel lived-in — as if she were staying in her own quarters.

"You just have to dare to open the door to find the magic inside of you," she said, describing her philosophy of performance. "The actor has to believe deeply in their own being and in their heart, gut, cells and mind. There has to be a layer of spirituality."

Binoche has visited China many times since 2009 — attending the Festival Croisements that year, making a guest appearance on Hunan Television's popular variety show *Happy Camp* in 2018, and sharing insights about her directorial debut, *In-I In Motion*, during the 2025 Beijing Culture Forum.

Asked what has impressed her most, she replied without hesitation: "Just meeting people. What are their lives and everyday experiences? Basically, there's a story in each of us. I've traveled to different places, and I'm always moved because some places are still unchanged.

"I love seeing villages where there is this sense of kindness and simplicity, and there are also some traditions that I really love in China."

Binoche also talked about the countryside, the mountains and Taoist legends. "For me, it brings so much awareness of why we are here on Earth. It's a way to prolong your thoughts and to connect with nature and the beauty of nature."

She even confessed an unexpected fondness for the Chinese *kang* — the traditional heated brick platform that serves as a bed, table and social anchor of the northern Chinese home. "I slept in it. I loved it. It was so peculiar and special," she said, recalling her visit to a house that had one.

As an actress with more than 60 films to her name, Binoche has worked with a stellar lineup of international stars, including Ralph Fiennes in *The English Patient*, Johnny Depp in *Chocolat*, and Ethan Hawke in *The Truth*. She has also stepped behind the camera, making her directorial debut with *In-I In Motion*, distilled from 170 hours of raw and archival footage documenting her dance-theater collaboration with British choreographer Akram Khan.

So what kind of role still draws her — actress or director?

"I have experienced so many. I have been very lucky. I have worked with wonderful directors and actors. As an actor, you have to give a lot of yourself, otherwise nothing will come out," she said.

For all her accolades, Binoche admitted to moments of doubt. Sometimes, she wakes at 6 am and asks herself the same question: "Why did I choose this work?"

The answer, even after all these years, returns with quiet clarity. "At the end of the day, it's worth it because it gives a sense of purpose. It makes you happy and lighter in a way. The lightness comes from being really on your own path and choosing a path that is meaningful to you and to others as well," she says.

Contact the writers at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Spy thriller *Black Silk* deepens cross-border film ties with Russia

MOSCOW — On the outskirts of Moscow, the set of the spy thriller *Black Silk* is more than a filming location — it offers a glimpse into a growing cinematic partnership between China and Russia.

During a recent visit to the set, Russian Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova described such large-scale international cooperation as "unimaginable" a decade ago. She noted that the task now is to employ modern cinematic language to create emotional resonance for audiences in both countries.

The collaboration is underpinned by a strategic action plan signed in May 2025, in which film authorities from China and Russia committed to a long-term road map for cooperation through 2030. The plan prioritizes joint productions and cross-border film exchanges to deepen cultural ties through cinema.

At the production site, actors from China, Russia, Serbia, Japan and Germany are preparing for their roles. Costumes from different eras and regions coexist, while scripts annotated in multiple languages reflect the multilingual nature of the set.

Black Silk follows the success of its predecessor, *Red Silk*, a flagship project under the China-Russia Years of Culture framework. With earnings of $1.8 million, *Red Silk* topped the rankings of the highest-grossing Russian films of 2025 at the foreign box office.

The new production aims to build on that momentum with enhanced scale and quality.

Set in 1930s Shanghai, *Black Silk* unfolds against a backdrop of international intrigue, centering on a high-stakes search for a mysterious cargo.

While rich in action, the film also draws on historical narratives. Screenwriter Maria Nefedova said the creative team seeks to present history in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences. "Russia and China share a long history of good-neighborly relations. We have faced challenges together, and I hope the film reflects the mutual support between our peoples," she said.





Left: A moment from the opening ceremony of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival in Beijing on April 16. XIE HAN / XINHUA **Right:** A still from the film *Red Silk*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To re-create scenes at sea, the production team constructed a large vessel mounted on a hydraulic platform, equipped with a water discharge system to simulate waves and storms. The set allows for dynamic, immersive filming conditions.

Chinese actress Zheng Hanyi, who also appeared in *Red Silk*, said the experience goes beyond filmmaking. "It is also a process of cultural exchange. You can feel the two cultures learning from each other," she said, expressing hope for more joint projects in the future.

Lyubimova said films play an important role in cultural exchange. She expressed confidence that *Black Silk* will further advance cooperation between filmmakers of the two countries.

Production is currently ongoing, with the film slated for release in 2027.

According to Svetlana Balanova, CEO of National Media Group in Russia, film projects jointly produced by Russia and China are strengthening bilateral ties and promoting cultural dialogue.

Balanova highlighted *Red Silk* as a milestone in advancing a systematic approach to jointly promoting national cinema and producing works that reflect shared values.

Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War. According to Balanova, Russian audiences were drawn to the film's dynamic storyline and performances, while Chinese viewers were attracted by its portrayal of resilience in harsh Siberian conditions.

She added that the sequel will retain key elements that appealed to audiences in the original while expanding its narrative scope, visual style and production capabilities. "*Black Silk* is an independent story with new mysteries and characters, accessible to fans of the first film and those just getting to know the story, both in Russia and abroad," she said.

Following the success of the first installment, Balanova expressed optimism that the sequel would achieve a strong box-office performance and attract a wider global audience.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

TABLE TENNIS

CHINA RALLIES FOR GLORY

Despite tough early going, resilience and squad depth see teams through to victory in London



Wang Chuqing (left) and Sun Yingsha proved instrumental as the Chinese men's and women's teams defended their titles at the World Team Table Tennis Championships in London on Sunday. XINHUA

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite a double delight at the world team championships, China's mighty table tennis squad has refused to revel in complacency, as it braces for a challenging lead-up to LA28 with sobering takeaways from London.

With a convincing defeat of archrival Japan in both finals, China's formidable national program has left the sport in awe of its resilience and depth, both of which proved vital and are still unrivaled, for securing its seventh women's and 12th men's team titles in a row at London's OVO Arena Wembley on Sunday.

As Chinese fans celebrate widely for both squads having lifted their respective trophies — the Corbillon Cup for women and Swaythling Cup for men — for a record-extending 24th time, China's top paddlers know it was anything but a smooth sail, hailing the test along the way as being equally valuable to the silverware lifted in the end.

"The result eventually went our way today, but the process was far more challenging than the outcome," world No 1 women's star Sun Yingsha said after helping China outlast Japan 3-2 in a close final.

"We'd prepared the hardest as we could to face such a competitive opponent, and we really had to stay extremely focused (to clinch the victory)," said the 25-year-old who won both her rubbers in the final.

Having racked up 20 world titles at the World Cup, world championships and Olympics, Sun's composure, experience and seamless game proved critical, as she twice leveled the battle for Team China by beating Hina Hayata and Miwa Harimoto in the second and fourth matches, following teammates Wang Manyu's opening loss to Harimoto and Kuai Man's defeat by Honoka Hashimoto in the third rubber.

With the title on the line, Wang delivered under pressure by routing Hayata in straight sets to complete China's comeback win, while clinching its sixth straight final win over Japan at the team worlds since 2014.

The victory was built as much on resilience as on quality, as Sun reckoned, with Team China pushed harder by its East Asian neighbor than in any previous encounter between the two nations.

"There were a lot of ups and downs in today's final. The Japanese team has developed comprehensive strength and is really performing better and better. The battle between us could really have gone either way," said Sun.

"Our strength lies in our depth, and we proved that, collectively, Team China is always the best."

The progress of the ambitious Japanese women, though, shouldn't be overlooked, underlined by teen sensation Harimoto's fearless style that stunned the experienced Wang in the opener, and the unique game of chopper Hashimoto that disrupted Kuai's pace in the third matchup.

"Credit to Sha Sha who steadied the ship," Wang said of Sun's pivotal role. "She gave me a chance of redemption ... Overall, we had a tough final that we should learn from to help us get better."

On the men's side, Team China also got the job done, but not before a bumpy ride that tested its grit and rebuilt its confidence en route to meeting Japan, which was contesting its first team worlds final in 10 years.

With reigning singles Olympic champion Fan Zhendong opting to skip the London showdown, the young Chinese men's squad, led by current world No 1 Wang Chuqin, suffered rare group-stage defeats to South Korea and Sweden, raising concerns over its gold-defending mettle, even before the knockout round kicked off in London.

Thanks to Wang's consistency, and the maturing game of teammates such as Liang Jingkun, Team China regrouped and responded like a champion during the high-stakes knockout stage, saving its best for last to demolish the Japanese side 3-0 in the final, after successfully avenging its earlier group loss to Korea in the quarterfinals and ousting European power France in the semis.

Citing the team's strong mental edge under pressure, Wang said he takes extra pride from being able to hit back at the doubters on the table.

"A lot of people said they didn't know that would happen with Team China before the championships, and I said: 'Bring it on and we will show you what we've got!' This is how we responded," Wang said after the final.

"Of course, the international competition we are facing is getting stronger. We have to prepare for each and every international event with utmost caution, like treading on thin ice," said Wang, who celebrated his 26th birthday on Monday, a day after the final.

Still, the absence of Fan's finesse was felt, with both Liang and another teammate, Lin Shidong, proving not yet as dominant as Wang on the biggest international stage.

Making his team worlds debut, the 21-year-old Lin, despite his potential, had his lack of consistency fully exposed with four losses in London, while Liang's slow start, which saw him have to battle back the hard way from 2-0 down against Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto to deliver Team China's opening win in the final, has emerged as a concern for future major events.

Their respective old injuries, on Lin's shoulder and Liang's waist and knee, should be taken into perspective, yet Team China refuses to make any excuses.

"Our young athletes have gained major experience and have learned lessons about their weakness," Wang Liqin, president of the Chinese Table Tennis Association, said in his review of the championships.

"Looking ahead, we should carry forward the fighting spirit of the Chinese table tennis program, identify our weakness in training and improve them for future competitions in order to strive for more honors in the buildup to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics," said Wang.

SPORT CLIMBING

Zhao continues his meteoric rise, smashes another record

By **LI YINGXUE**
liyingxue@chinadaily.com.cn

In barely the blink of an eye, 16-year-old Chinese climber Zhao Yicheng had already slammed the buzzer — and rewritten the world record yet again.

At the World Climbing Series Wujiang 2026 on Sunday night, Zhao stormed to victory in the men's speed event with a time of 4.54 seconds, breaking his own world record for the second time in a month and defeating former record holder Samuel Watson of the United States in a much-anticipated semifinal showdown.

For the climbing world, it was more than a race. It was a direct duel between two of the sport's brightest young stars.

Watson, born in 2006, emerged during the Paris Olympic cycle as one of speed climbing's defining talents, becoming the first athlete to push the discipline into the "4.70-second era".

Yet since the Paris Games, global attention has increasingly shifted toward Zhao, his younger Chinese counterpart, who has already claimed three world youth titles and repeatedly produced times faster than previous world records.

Just weeks before arriving in Wujiang, Jiangsu province, Zhao had lowered Watson's mark to 4.58 seconds at the Asian Beach Games. In Wujiang, he went even faster.

Once the starting signal sounded, both climbers exploded up the wall almost simultaneously. Zhao produced the fastest reaction time of the day and maintained his advantage throughout the climb, stopping the clock at 4.54 seconds.

Yet Zhao insisted afterward that the climb was far from perfect.

"I think everyone performed at a high level in this competition, but my performance was definitely not perfect," he said. "I still saw a lot of details I can improve upon, and I feel I can climb even faster in the future."

Despite being labeled a "genius" by many observers, Zhao credited both talent and hard work for his rise.

"I have to admit that I do have talent, because talent makes my hard work more effective," he said. "But I also don't think I work any less hard than others. Talent gives me a higher starting point, while hard work allows me to go further."

The teenager said elite competition motivates rather than intimidates him.

"Honestly, without him, I probably wouldn't have climbed such a fast time today," Zhao said of Watson. "I didn't feel pressure facing him — more motivation than anything."

That motivation was evident in his explosive semifinal start, where Zhao recorded the quickest reaction time of the day.



Zhao Yicheng of China and Samuel Watson of the United States in action during the semifinal of the World Climbing Series Wujiang 2026 on Sunday night. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"My opponents don't actually affect me that much personally. I focus more on myself," he said. "Before competitions, I usually listen to music to help myself relax and get into the rhythm of the event."

Adding another layer of significance, Zhao's breakthrough performance came in his hometown of Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

For years, he had attended the Wujiang event as a spectator. On Sunday night, he stood center stage as champion.

"From being a spectator to becoming an athlete, I've been watching the Wujiang competition for three or four straight years," Zhao said. "Last year, I was already looking forward to doing something on this stage.

"But, today, I actually felt more relaxed. Maybe people outside have certain expectations of me, but I think the enthusiasm of the crowd allowed me to completely be myself."

Watson, who eventually took bronze, also offered glowing praise for the Chinese teenager.

"He is undoubtedly the most talented speed climber I've ever seen," the 20-year-old American said. "I knew I had to give 100 percent against him."

Watson revealed that the two climbers had already become familiar with each other and even chatted about basketball beside the podium before the medal ceremony.

Chinese climber Long Jianguo claimed silver in the men's speed competition.

Wujiang in limelight

Beyond the headline duel, the Wujiang leg highlighted broader changes reshaping competitive climbing ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where speed, lead and boulder will each become standalone medal events.

Specialization is accelerating across the sport, with athletes pushing single-discipline performances to new extremes. In Wujiang, the overall standard in speed climbing rose dramatically. The men's cutoff time to reach the finals improved from 5.07 seconds at last year's world championships to 4.94 seconds, while the women's mark improved from 7.18 to 6.67 seconds.

The sport is also becoming an increasingly youthful pursuit.

China's entire lead climbing squad at the event consisted of athletes born after 2000, with the oldest only 25 years old.

Eighteen-year-old Chinese climber Hu Junzhe advanced to the semifinals in the lead discipline after an impressive qualification performance.

Meanwhile, Wujiang continues to strengthen its status as one of China's climbing strongholds.

Since first hosting the event in 2013, the city has staged the international competition 11 times. This year's event again embraced the "Climbing+" model, combining competition with tourism, cultural activities, local markets and outdoor experiences as part of a broader push to integrate sports, culture and regional development.

From a once niche pursuit to an Olympic discipline constantly redefining human limits, climbing's rapid rise in China has unfolded alongside Wujiang's transformation into one of the sport's key hubs.

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CHINA DAILY

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Sino-Tajik bilateral ties enter new phase

Xi and Rahmon sign treaty on permanent good-neighborliness

By **CAO DESHENG**
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Tajikistan signed a treaty of permanent good-neighborliness, friendship and cooperation on Tuesday, ushering in a new phase in bilateral ties.

President Xi Jinping and visiting Tajik President Emomali Rahmon signed the treaty at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Rahmon is in China on a four-day state visit, which started on Monday.

During their talks, Xi said that firmly supporting each other is the core essence of China-Tajikistan relations.

He said that regardless of changes in the external environment, China and Tajikistan will always remain good neighbors who help each other, good friends who trust each other with sincerity, and good partners who join hands for development.

The signing of the China-Tajikistan Treaty on Permanent Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation will fully demonstrate the high level of political mutual trust between the two countries, providing a solid guarantee for everlasting friendship from one generation to another, Xi said, adding that China is willing to work with Tajikistan to promote the building of a closer community with a shared future to better benefit the people of both nations.

Rahmon hailed the signing of the treaty, saying that it marks the start of a new historical stage in the countries' relations, and will open up new prospects for their long-term cooperation.

The treaty came amid the steady growth of bilateral ties guided by the two heads of state in recent years. In 2023, the two countries announced the building of a China-Tajikistan community with a shared future featuring everlasting friendship, solidarity and mutual benefit. In 2024, the two countries elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in the new era.

Xi paid three state visits to Tajikistan — in 2014, 2019 and 2024. Rahmon visited China 22 times, and his last trip to China was to attend the 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Tianjin and the grand gathering to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War in Beijing last September.



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon in Beijing on Tuesday. Rahmon is in China on a four-day state visit, which started on Monday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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During the talks on Tuesday, Xi called on the two countries to deeply align their development strategies under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative to assist each other in achieving their development goals.

He underlined the need to consolidate the positive momentum of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries to explore cooperation potential, and simultaneously enhance the scale and quality of trade and investment.

It is essential to ensure the implementation of key projects, expand cooperation in areas such as green energy, the digital economy, smart cities and artificial intelligence, and boost technological innovation, Xi said.

Xi highlighted the need to strengthen law enforcement and security cooperation in order to resolutely combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and jointly maintain regional stability.

Rahmon hailed the development of bilateral ties and fruitful cooperation in such fields as trade, investment, transportation and agriculture. He reiterated Tajikistan's commitment to the one-China principle, saying that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China.

Tajikistan looks forward to strengthening practical cooperation with China in key areas such as critical minerals, AI and technological innovation, facilitating mutual visits and enhancing educational exchanges to further advance the relationship between the two countries, he said.

Rahmon said the Global Governance Initiative, proposed by President Xi, holds significant importance for the world. Tajikistan highly appreciates China's relentless efforts to promote the political settlement of international hotspot issues and its important role in easing tensions in the Middle East, he said.

After the talks, the two heads of state signed a joint statement of the two countries on deepening the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in the new era. They also witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in areas such as political party exchanges, trade and investment, AI, green minerals and media.

Economic and trade cooperation has been a steady driver of China-Tajikistan ties. China has become Tajikistan's largest trading partner and remains its top source of investment. Bilateral trade reached $790 million in the first quarter of this year, a year-on-year increase of over 50 percent, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Liu Yitong, an assistant research fellow at the Department for World Economy and Development of the China Institute of International Studies, said that amid growing uncertainties and instability in the international situation, strengthening high-level exchanges and deepening strategic mutual trust between China and Tajikistan are of great practical and exemplary significance.

Rahmon's China visit is expected to solidify political mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation, enhance cultural exchanges and strengthen security collaboration between the two countries, Liu said.

Xi navigates China-US relations amid global uncertainty

By **XINHUA**

The Chinese capital will soon become the setting for one of the most closely watched, high-stakes diplomatic encounters of the year, as the leaders of the world's two largest economies prepare to meet face-to-face.

This will be US President Donald Trump's first state visit to China since his reelection, and the second time President Xi Jinping has hosted him in the country — their last such meeting in the country took place nearly a decade ago.

Against the backdrop of a complex international landscape and shared global challenges, expectations are high: How can President Xi and Trump manage differences between the two sides? How can they navigate the most consequential bilateral relationship?

"You and I are at the helm of China-US relations," Xi told Trump during their talks in Busan, South Korea, in October 2025. Lasting more than 100 minutes, the meeting was another moment of direct engagement between the two leaders as they sought to steer China-US ties through uncertainty.

Using a maritime metaphor that is a recurring theme in his remarks, Xi asked Trump to help keep the "giant ship" of bilateral ties sailing steadily forward.

Over the years, head-of-state diplomacy has anchored China-US relations, serving as a stabilizing force amid shifting global currents. Since Trump's reelection, Xi has spoken with him by phone five times, maintaining close communication on ties and global hotspot issues.

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Stable Sino-US ties linked to global outlook

By **PRIME SARMIENTO**
in Hong Kong
prime@chinadailyapac.com

US President Donald Trump's upcoming state visit to Beijing and his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping are fueling a high sense of anticipation across the Asia-Pacific and beyond, with analysts noting that stable China-US ties will benefit the regional and global outlook.

Trump is scheduled to visit China from Wednesday to Friday. Analysts expect that discussions on the US tariffs — which have been weighing on Asian economic growth — will be part of the closely-watched dialogue between the presidents.

"International eyes will be on this summit between Xi and Trump, what they will be discussing, whether any new deals will be made and (whether they will cover) certain deals that have been discussed previously and whether that would continue," said Mustafa Izzuddin, an international analyst at Solaris Strategies Singapore.

He said that what is important is that there is a channel of communication between the two major powers.

"I think we have to be realistic about what can be achieved," Mustafa said. "But I think at the same time, there is hope and some degree of optimism that because the two leaders have agreed to meet, that in itself is a positive step".



US President Donald Trump boards Air Force One on Tuesday at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, for a state visit to China. ALEX WONG / GETTY IMAGES / AFP

Mustafa said that Asian countries would like to see trade tensions between the world's top two economies "kept as minimal as possible".

"What happens between the US and China will have huge ramifications for the rest of Asia," he said.

Amitendu Palit, a senior research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, said that most Asian economies are hoping that US-China tensions "are not going to flare up in a way that becomes damaging to the prospects of the Asian economy which leads to disruptions in Asian supply chains".

"So I think this is where the Asian economies really have a very high stake," Palit said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday that Xi will have an in-depth exchange of views with Trump on major issues concerning China-US relations and world peace and development.

Irreplaceable role

In a news briefing, Guo pointed out that head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable role in providing strategic guidance for China-US relations.

Trump's visit this week will mark his first trip to China during his second term in office, and the first visit to China by a US president in nine years.

Xi and Trump last met in October 2025 in Busan, South Korea, on the sidelines of the APEC summit.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura Securities, said the meeting this week between the leaders "represents a critical moment in US-China relations".

"The meeting offers both sides an opportunity to stabilize relations and secure short-term wins," Lu said in his latest research note.

He expected trade issues to dominate the discussions, with negotiations on tariffs to be heavily influenced by the US Supreme Court ruling in February that invalidated several of the tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

Palit said the US tariff issue is a key concern in Asia owing to its huge impact on international trade and supply chains.

"This is again an area of deep uncertainty," he said. Unresolved conflict between the US and China over tariffs would create "a lot of uncertainty" over the management of supply chains, Palit added.

Beijing, Washington should lead way to peace, development

WORLD WATCH
By Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira

At a time of intensifying geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, climate vulnerability and rapid technological change, the roles of China and the United States are globally significant. As the world's largest economies and most influential actors, their relationship is a core pillar of global stability.

US President Donald Trump's three-day state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday provides a timely opportunity to recalibrate this relationship through renewed dialogue and strategic restraint. The trajectory of China-US relations will shape both bilateral outcomes and global development, particularly across the Global South.

Today's interconnected risks exceed any single state's capacity. Armed conflicts destabilize regions, while supply chain vulnerabilities and financial volatility expose structural weaknesses in the global economy.

Concurrently, rising inflation and unsustainable debt burdens constrain policy space in developing countries.

Climate change compounds these pressures, disproportionately affecting low-income regions.

Across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, policy priorities remain centered on economic recovery, poverty alleviation, food security, infrastructure and technological access.

These concerns contrast sharply with the growing strategic competition between major powers.

Against this backdrop, China and the US bear a heightened responsibility to manage their differences within a framework of strategic stability.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Diplomacy: Seeking the right path for relations

From page 1

The two presidents first met in 2017, a year marked by an exchange of state visits that set the tone for their interactions. In April that year, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, visited Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in the US state of Florida, where the two presidents dined together and Xi met Trump's family, including his grandchildren.

It was during that visit that Xi delivered a line often recalled in discussions of bilateral ties: "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-US relationship a success, but not a single reason to break it."

Several months later, in November, Trump traveled to Beijing, where Xi hosted him during a series of special events. The two leaders and their spouses toured the Forbidden City along its central axis, visiting the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony and the Hall of Preserving Harmony — an experience imbued with the Chinese cultural ideal of "harmony" reflected in the names of the three grand halls.

Walking inside the ancient royal palace, Xi told Trump that China's history can be traced back more than 5,000 years, or even earlier, and its culture has been passed down in an unbroken continuum.

During a chat over tea on that trip, Trump showed Xi a video of his granddaughter, Arabella Kushner, singing and reciting classical poems in Mandarin. Xi said her performance deserved an A-plus. The clip quickly resonated with Chinese netizens and went viral online.

Those early exchanges were widely seen as helping to build a personal rapport between the two leaders, offering a channel to understand each other, manage differences and prevent the relationship from sliding into outright confrontation. "I have a lot of respect for President Xi," Trump has often said.

The past years have seen Xi's meetings with US leaders using this approach — from the Mar-a-Lago summit and the Yingtai evening talks in the Zhongnanhai compound to the long conversation by China's West Lake — often remembered as defining moments in bilateral ties.

The upcoming meeting is expected to continue the tradition of high-level engagement. "The real significance of this meeting may not lie in any grand deal," said Denis Simon, a senior fellow at the Quincy Institute. "Instead, it will test whether the United States and China can establish an equilibrium."

Earlier this year, on Feb 4 — "*lichun*", the traditional Chinese marker for the beginning of spring — Xi spoke with Trump by phone for the first time in 2026, returning to the metaphor that has come to define his messages on bilateral ties.

"In the year ahead," Xi said, "I look forward to working with you to steer the giant ship of China-US relations through winds and waves, keep it on a steady course, and achieve more major and positive outcomes."



President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan, and US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania Trump visit the Palace Museum in Beijing on Nov 8, 2017. LAN HONGGUANG / XINHUA

Avoiding miscalculations

In recent years, China-US relations have experienced twists and turns. Some observers fear that China and the United States may repeat the historical pattern of major-power rivalry known as the "Thucydides Trap." Yet, Xi has rejected this notion: "There is no such thing as a 'Thucydides Trap' in the world. But repeated strategic miscalculations between major countries could create one for themselves."

Avoiding such miscalculations, therefore, has become a critical task for China and the United States, which requires both sides to engage in candid dialogue on several key issues.

Foremost is the Taiwan question. President Xi has repeatedly and unequivocally conveyed China's fundamental stance to the US side. In the Feb 4 phone conversation with Trump, Xi once again stressed that the Taiwan question is the most important and sensitive issue in China-US relations, urging the US side to handle arms sales to Taiwan with utmost prudence.

Trade is another critical issue. In the face of unilateral US tariff offensives, China, under Xi's leadership, has taken resolute countermeasures.

At the same time, Beijing has kept channels of engagement open. Xi has dispatched economic and trade teams that have held six rounds of talks with the US side, seeking to narrow differences step by step while expanding common ground. Currently, trade ties between the two countries remain roughly steady. The two sides are holding a new round of trade talks in South Korea from May 12 to 13.

During their Busan meeting, Xi underscored the broader perspective needed to manage such frictions.

"Both sides should take a broader and longer-term view," Xi told Trump, "focusing on the lasting benefits of cooperation instead of falling into a vicious cycle of retaliation." Trump described Xi as a great leader and a firm negotiator.

How, then, does Xi envision the direction of bilateral ties leading into the future? In a speech delivered in San Francisco in 2023, he posed what he described as the number-one question: "Are we adversaries, or partners?"

"If one sees the other side as a primary competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat," he warned, "it will only lead to misinformed policy making, misguided actions, and unwanted results."

Xi also stressed that China has no intention of challenging or unseating the United States. "China never bets against the United States," he said. "Likewise, the United States should not bet against China."

Drawing on the experience of China-US relations, Xi has outlined three principles — mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation — as the right path forward for the two countries.

'Small ball moves big globe'

This April, Xi sent a congratulatory letter to an event commemorating the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy, recalling the historic 1971 episode often described as "a small ball moving the big globe."

In 1971, a US table tennis team visited Beijing, a breakthrough that thawed more than two decades of estrangement, and helped pave the way for then US President Richard Nixon's landmark visit to China in 1972, and later the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1979. Its impact extended far beyond the bilateral sphere, profoundly reshaping the global landscape.

More than half a century on, Xi referred to the story not merely as a historical memory, but as a reminder of the profound influence stable China-US relations can have on the wider world.

In a 2024 meeting with Antony Blinken, former US Secretary of State, Xi invoked a concept inspired by traditional Chinese culture — "*tong qiu gong ji*" ("working together for the common good on the same planet").

"Planet Earth is only this big, and humanity is faced with so many common challenges," Xi said. "As an old Chinese saying goes, 'Passengers in the same boat should help each other.' Today, as I see it, 'dwellers of the same planet should help each other'."

During their meeting in Busan, Trump also acknowledged the importance of cooperation between the two countries, saying that China and the United States can get many great things done for the world and have many years of success.

"There is no geopolitical relationship more important than the China-US bilateral relationship ... with by far the largest impact on global affairs," said Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation.

For both countries, a stable China-US relationship helps remove obstacles to domestic development. More broadly, it carries profound significance for global stability and prosperity, according to Kuhn.

The timing adds further weight to the relationship. In 2026, China is embarking on its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), while the United States marks the 250th anniversary of its founding. The two countries will respectively host major global gatherings, the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen and the G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami, which will place them at the center of the international agenda.

Beyond red-line and trade issues, observers also point to several areas where cooperation remains vital for both sides, including climate change, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence.

For Xi, it is precisely these countless small acts of cooperation that carry lasting significance.

He once reminded Trump that for China and the United States, "it is always right to do a good thing, however small, and always wrong to do a bad thing, however small."

Just as the Chinese leader has noted on many occasions, China and the United States, as two major countries, can shoulder their responsibilities and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of both countries and the whole world.



The First Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings are held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, from Feb 1 to 10, 2026. DENG HUA / XINHUA

> In the year ahead, I look forward to working with you (Donald Trump) to steer the giant ship of China-US relations through winds and waves, keep it on a steady course, and achieve more major and positive outcomes."
>
> **President Xi Jinping** on Feb 4





Left: A China-US table tennis friendly match is played at Shanghai University of Sport in Shanghai on April 13. WANG XIANG / XINHUA **Right:** A cargo ship loaded with foreign trade containers docks at a berth at Qingdao Port in Shandong province on Saturday. YU FANGPING / XINHUA

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SINO-US SUMMIT



Players from Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington state, the United States, and Capital University of Physical Education and Sports participate in a friendly flag football match in Beijing on April 9. FU TIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Exchanges among young people exceed expectations

By **ZOU SHUO**
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

More than 48,500 young people from the United States have visited China for exchange and study programs since the launch of the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative more than two years ago, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Education.

The initiative, which was announced by President Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November 2023, aims to encourage more exchanges among young people of the two countries.

Yang Dan, head of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of Education, said the initiative has been widely applauded by Chinese and US communities as a means to boost people-to-people ties and inject youthful vitality into bilateral relations.

"The initiative's implementation has seen progress, exceeding expectations in terms of speed, outcomes and global impact," Yang said.

As of early March, the number of young people from the US visiting China had surpassed 48,500, he said, adding that they traveled from all 50 states of the US and visited 31 provincial-level regions on the Chinese mainland, as well as the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

> "The initiative's implementation has seen progress, exceeding expectations in terms of speed, outcomes and global impact."
>
> **Yang Dan,** head of the Ministry of Education's Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges

The groups comprised students from institutions ranging from primary schools to universities in the US, and many of them set foot in China for the first time, gaining a vivid and multidimensional understanding of the country, Yang said.

The projects and activities they participated in ranged from cultural experiences and language learning to summer and winter camps, science and technology exchanges, sports competitions, academic credit programs and degree courses.

"Seeing is believing," Yang said, noting that by touring China, these young people from the US have been able to closely engage with their Chinese peers on topics such as global governance, environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation and innovative development.

He said that young people from the US returned home with lively stories about China, becoming rational and objective voices with regard to China-US ties.

Fifty thousand young people means 50,000 friendships and 50,000 channels of communication, Yang said, emphasizing that they could turn the inclusive, open, trusting and win-win spirit cultivated through peer activities into a solid foundation for the positive growth of bilateral relations.

They can become a lasting source of strength for the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations, he added.

Moving forward, Yang said, China will explore more diverse forms of exchange, build more platforms and introduce stronger social support to encourage sustained and institutionalized mutual visits.

When more and more young people from China and the US become envoys of friendship and when heart-to-heart communication forms a mighty force, the China-US relationship will be built on a stronger foundation and have a brighter future, Yang said.

One notable example of such an exchange took place at Jiaxing University in Zhejiang province in May last year, when 11 students and faculty members from Missouri State University attended a business administration exchange program.

During the weeklong event, the US delegation visited Alibaba and Hormel Foods to learn about cross-border e-commerce and localized product innovation.

As part of an in-depth exploration of Jiaxing's specialty industries, the participants studied how local woolen sweater enterprises have adopted cross-border e-commerce and artificial intelligence-driven solutions to upgrade their operations and boost exports.

Cultural activities included making traditional pastries, dumplings and *zongzi*, or sticky rice wrapped in leaves with various fillings, as well as visits to Nanhu Lake in Jiaxing and West Lake in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang.

"This trip to China, to Jiaxing, will be an unforgettable memory for the rest of my life. I will tell my classmates back in the US about the different China I have experienced," said Michael James Guilfoy, a student from Missouri State University.

Anthony Lakin, another student from the university, who documented his journey on camera, called it "the best experience" of his life, adding that he would definitely ask his family members and friends to visit China.

Daezia Cymone Smith, a Missouri State University faculty member, said that she will tell her family about "the real China", which is "a very cool experience".

China, US can inject impetus into recovery

Structural complementarity of nations helps benefit businesses on both sides, say experts

By **WANG KEJU** and **MA SI**

As the world's two largest economies, China and the United States can benefit businesses on both sides and inject fresh momentum into global economic recovery by finding more common ground and working together to manage differences, said economists and business executives.

The structural complementarity between the two nations, which spans manufacturing, technology and services, is too significant to be disrupted by trade frictions, they added.

"American companies are continuing to invest. American companies aren't going anywhere," said Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, countering the narrative that US businesses are leaving China.

"It's not just the China market anymore; it's the China platform," he said, noting that the platform encompasses everything — from consumer access and partnerships with local enterprises to research and development and supply chain resilience — which is "only becoming more important".

Stein emphasized that coming to China will help US business leaders develop a clearer view and a more realistic understanding of where China stands. Until that happens, it is easy to imagine dangers and concerns that may not be as serious as they seem, he said. "Twenty-five years ago, no one came to China to do R&D. Now what I'm seeing is that the best companies are coming and doing some of their most important R&D," he added.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, foreign direct investment in China's high-tech industries surged 30.7 percent year-on-year to 102.73 billion yuan ($15.12 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, pushing the sector's share in total FDI to 41.2 percent.

Eric Zheng, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, said that if US companies want to remain globally competitive, they should invest in China. "A US company that can thrive in China can succeed in many other markets around the world. The experience and capabilities built here can be directly applied elsewhere," he said.

Zheng added that the complementarity of the US-China economic relationship means that stable and predictable bilateral trade ties serve the fundamental interests of both nations and greatly benefit businesses on both sides.

Geoff Martha, chairman and CEO of the US-based medical technology company Medtronic, said that China is not only a market with the potential to become the world's largest market for medical technology, but also a valuable partner.

"That commitment is reflected in our long-term investments," he said. "We see strong alignment between China's focus on new quality productive forces and Medtronic's work to develop next-generation technologies that can improve care and expand access for patients."

Surveys indicate that US businesses prefer stability over confrontation. In late April, a white paper released by the American Chamber of Commerce in China noted that more than half of US companies in China still rank the country among their top three global investment destinations.

Liao Fan, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said that despite years of trade tensions and escalating rhetoric, the underlying economic logic of China-US cooperation remains intact.

"You cannot decouple two economies that have been interwoven together over decades through investment, supply chain integration and market interdependence. The cost of separation would be measured in trillions of dollars and millions of jobs," Liao said.

Zhang Yansheng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, noted that China and the US are not only very important for each other, but their relationship is of utmost importance for the world.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the combined nominal GDP of China and the US accounted for nearly 45 percent of the global economy in 2025. A report released in March by the US-based McKinsey Global Institute also showed that the decline in US-China trade reduced global trade growth by around 10 percent last year.

He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization, said that for the relationship to be truly fair and mutually beneficial, the US must remove the unreasonable restrictions it has imposed on China.

Contact the writers at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Duo builds bridge of friendship across time, weaving new threads of Kuliang stories

By **JI HAISHENG**
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Nestled in the green hills near the coastal city of Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province, is a village called Kuliang, which was once home to a vibrant international community. After the foreign residents left in the mid-20th century, people largely forgot about the thriving community that once called Kuliang home.

Decades later, the stories are being revived thanks to a trans-Pacific partnership. Using old photos, personal networks and new technology, a Chinese professor and a cultural researcher from the United States are rebuilding human connections lost to time.

The collaboration began in 2015, when Elyn MacInnis, a US citizen with strong family ties to China, traveled to Fuzhou with her husband to fulfill two wishes. The first was to scatter her father-in-law's ashes in the Minjiang River, which flows through Fuzhou, thereby honoring his wish to return to the city where he once lived and taught. The second, and more challenging task, was to find the family's old home in Kuliang.

To help with the search, they brought with them a collection of faded color photos taken in the 1940s. Among those who tried to help was Lin Yinan, a Fuzhou native and an associate professor at the Shanghai-based East China University of Science and Technology. "We got the photos and tried to identify the house, but we couldn't pinpoint its location," Lin recalled. "That's where the story began."

Sense of connection

That visit instilled a renewed sense of connection in MacInnis. Upon returning to the US, she delved deeper into the archives to uncover Kuliang's stories and began reaching out to other US families with connections to the mountain village, leading to the establishment of the Kuliang Friends group. The breakthrough came in 2016, when MacInnis found a map of Kuliang and a name list. But it was written in an incomprehensible script: English phonetic approximations of the Fuzhou dialect.

Lin stepped in to bridge the gap. "I'm a local," Lin explained. "I can understand the dialect, and I speak both English and Chinese, so I could help decode it."

Lin's and MacInnis' skills proved complementary. In the US, MacInnis took on the role of archival detective, scouring libraries, family collections and online databases for photographs, letters and diaries. Lin in China became the decoder and field researcher, using his knowledge to translate names and verify locations on the ground.

"We instantly became the team — the Kuliang research team — the two of us," said MacInnis. The duo leveraged the time difference to work around the clock, joking that they simply took turns to sleep while the other worked, since they were on opposite sides of the world. "We worked basically 24 hours a day, seven days a week," MacInnis said, "as hard as we could — in archives, on the internet, with other people."

As the flow of information grew, a new challenge emerged: how could the unnamed faces in the old photographs be identified? Lin and his team of students engineered an innovative solution. They developed the Kuliang Genealogy system, which is China's first digital archive for an overseas community. Using facial recognition technology, the system scans old photos, identifies individuals and reconstructs family trees and social networks.

One of the human connections restored by the system led to an unusual reunion. It gave 85-year-old Gail Harris, whose family once spent their summers in Kuliang, the first-ever glimpse of her mother as a 21-year-old, as captured in a Fuzhou college faculty photo. For Lin, such moments strengthened his sense of mission: to rebuild a severed social fabric. "When I see old photos of Chinese and Americans staying together, I just want to tell their descendants, 'Look, your ancestors were good friends'," he said.

With their joint efforts, Lin and MacInnis have traced at least 80 families and 120 houses with links to Kuliang, and the Kuliang Friends network has expanded to comprise more than 50 members. Notable discoveries include the families of Ruth Hemenway, a US physician who served mothers and children in Minqing, Fujian, for 12 years, and Bruce Hayes, a Fuzhou-born hero who served in a coast-watching unit in support of the Flying Tigers during World War II.

"We keep coming across new stories," said MacInnis. "It will never be rote or boring because we find new people and new stories all the time."

Tangible reality

For her, the power of Kuliang lies in its tangible reality. "Kuliang is not abstract or idealized. It's real," she said, citing the true stories and returning descendants as living proof. The community, she noted, was made up of real people — teachers, doctors, scientists and farmers — who had lived, worked and built trust alongside their Chinese neighbors over generations.



Lin Yinan (right), an associate professor at Shanghai-based East China University of Science and Technology, introduces to Elyn MacInnis the genealogical system to search for foreigners who lived in Kuliang, Fujian province, and their descendants during a meeting in the village on June 21, 2024. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

This is not something automatic, MacInnis reflected. "The story really is seeing what happens when you take the time to be friends and to work together."

She added that the whole Kuliang bond program has been a joy. For her, it is not only about the historical discovery, but also the chance to share it with a new generation, so they could inherit that spirit.

"It is that friendship that is one of the anchors of peace," she said. "We're all looking for that."

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WORLD

Envoys call for deeper China-California ties

Trade, innovation and green development emphasized at Los Angeles business forum

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
renali@chinadailyusa.com

Chinese envoys to the United States on Monday highlighted the importance of deepening China-California cooperation in trade, innovation and green development, while calling for mutual respect, openness and practical cooperation to help stabilize China-US relations amid global uncertainties.

The 2026 China-California Business Forum, themed "Better Understanding Better Business," brought together local US business leaders and a Chinese delegation consisting of more than 150 business leaders and trade officials from dozens of Chinese provinces. Hainan participated as the forum's guest province of honor.

In a video address to the forum, Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng said California's trade with China approached $90 billion last year, leading all US states, and noted that "two out of every five containers moving between China and the United States passed through California ports".

Xie said China's economy had maintained strong momentum despite a "fluid external environment", adding that China's recently adopted 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) outlined a strategic blueprint for Chinese modernization and higher-quality growth.

Xie said more people had come to recognize that China, with stable policies, dynamic growth and greater openness, is "an anchor of stability for the global economy" and "a window of opportunity for all parties to share in China's development dividends".

Calling California "a natural partner for China", Xie proposed four suggestions for advancing bilateral cooperation, including focusing on people's well-being, embracing green growth, upholding openness and unleashing innovation.

In particular, Xie said China and California could deepen cooperation in clean energy, green materials, carbon capture, utilization and storage, as well as green finance including green bonds, climate funds and carbon markets, helping build "a cleaner, more beautiful and more sustainable world".

Xie also stressed the importance of stable China-US relations, saying that "the more turbulent the world becomes, the more important China-US relations are". He reiterated that "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation should be the direction of our joint efforts".

Echoing Xie's remarks, Chinese Consul General in Los Angeles Guo Shaochun said the forum's development over the past decade demonstrated the significance of sub-national cooperation between China and California.

Guo said China and California maintained highly complementary economies and close cooperation in trade, ports, shipping, education, film and television, among other sectors.

He also highlighted the growing role of Chinese companies in California's economy. Guo said China ranked as the ninth-largest source of foreign investment in California in 2025, supporting more than 25,000 jobs.

At the same time, California-based companies including Apple, Qualcomm and Skechers continue to deepen cooperation with Chinese supply chain partners, he said.

Guo also pointed to cooperation between the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Shanghai on green shipping corridors and low-carbon development in the global shipping industry.

On educational exchanges, Guo said Southern California hosts more than 50,000 Chinese students annually, contributing over $4 billion to the local economy each year.

He also noted the success of Hollywood films in the Chinese market, citing *Zootopia 2* as an example. According to Guo, the film generated nearly 4.6 billion yuan ($637 million) at the Chinese box office, accounting for about half of its global revenue.

Guo said the business community remained "the most dynamic, pragmatic and resilient force in China-US relations" and called for expanded cooperation in modern agriculture, green transition, artificial intelligence, biomedicine and energy storage.

Local business leaders at the forum emphasized the significance of maintaining California-China cooperation.

Bay Area Council President and CEO Libby Schaaf expressed her appreciation for learning about China's trade policies and climate leadership.

"May our example of collaboration and cooperation for our shared benefits be an example and inspiration for all," she said.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave. Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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France's President Emmanuel Macron (second from right) and Kenya's President William Ruto (second from left) sing and dance with choir members upon their arrival ahead of the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi on Monday. LUDOVIC MARIN / AFP

France seeks to strengthen relations with Africa

By **EDITH MUTETHYA**
in Nairobi, Kenya
edithmutethya@chinadaily.com.cn

France is seeking to rebuild and strengthen its partnerships with African nations as it reassesses its strategy on the continent following strained relations with several West African countries, analysts said.

For the first time, France hosted the Africa Forward Summit in an English-speaking country, a move experts described as a strategic attempt to regain influence in Africa.

The two-day summit in Kenya's capital Nairobi from Monday to Tuesday drew participation from business leaders and some 30 heads of state from Africa, with France stressing "equal partnerships" with Africa, and announcing investments worth $27 billion for the continent.

The shift comes amid France's deteriorating ties with parts of West Africa, driven by rising anti-French sentiments, military coups, and growing calls to end colonial-era security arrangements in recent years.

Aly-Khan Satchu, a Kenyan investment banker, said the traditional "Francafrique" model has reached its end.

Satchu said that global trends point toward greater local ownership in partnerships, and urged African governments to negotiate stronger deals.

"It remains the responsibility of African governments to negotiate in the best interests of their citizens if we are to see the birth of genuinely equal partnerships," he said.

However, Gordon K'achola, founder of the Africa Center for Diplomatic Affairs, said France is trying to rebuild trust without directly apologizing.

"This strategy may not work for them but with woke African young leaders, they are getting into partnerships knowing what they actually want," he said, adding that France's historical legacy remains a major obstacle, particularly in Anglophone Africa, which refers to English-speaking regions in the continent.

He noted a deep trust deficit: "They shall cooperate with African countries with almost zero trust. It will be based on regaining the lost opportunity Africa has had to experience for all these years under the French manipulation."

Speaking at the summit opening, Kenya's President William Ruto said shifting global trade is reshaping the world economy.

"Fragmentation cannot be the answer, nor isolation the strategy," he said, calling for cooperation based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

Ruto said Africa must move beyond aid and dependency toward investment, innovation, and value creation.

"Africa is not part of the global problem but part of the solution," he said, highlighting the continent's natural resources, young population, and renewable energy potential.

Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, said Africa is now leading key global debates on reforming a financial system designed in 1945.

He said African leadership is building new tools such as the borrower's platform so that countries can speak with one voice and negotiate from a position of strength. "It is challenging credit rating systems that prevent many countries from accessing the borrowing tools they need," Guterres said.

He noted African-led efforts to strengthen collective bargaining, reform credit rating systems, and expand the lending capacity of development banks, while easing debt pressures.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the chairman of the African Union Commission, said Africa must take a leading role in global affairs.

Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, said Africa is now viewed as a full partner rather than just a source of raw materials.

"We are working toward a transformation of investment relations, focusing on value chains, energy, and sustainable development," he said, adding that future cooperation will emphasize financial reform, taxation, and debt restructuring.

Starmer vows to stay amid growing calls to resign

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has told his Cabinet he has no intention of stepping down despite coming under increasing internal pressure following last week's hugely disappointing local election results for the ruling Labour Party.

Three junior ministers have resigned from the government as of press time and they called for a change in leadership, but no candidate has yet come forward to challenge Starmer directly.

Earlier on Tuesday, the BBC reported that 78 of Labour's 403 members of parliament had called on him to go, with some senior ministers reported to be among them, but his message to the Cabinet was defiant.

"As I said yesterday, I take responsibility for these election results and I take responsibility for delivering the change we promised," he reportedly told them.

He went on to call the previous 48 hours "destabilizing for government", having an economic impact on the lives of voters, and added, "The Labour Party has a process for challenging a leader and that has not been triggered.

"The country expects us to get on with governing. That is what I am doing and what we must do as a Cabinet." Writing on X, Housing Secretary Steve Reed gave Starmer his backing, repeating the point about voters paying the price for party infighting.

"This instability has consequences for people's lives," he said.

"The people who will be hurt most will be those that elected us less than two years ago. We must unite behind the prime minister."

Starmer gave a speech to Labour MPs on Monday where he hoped to regain control of the situation, but a statement from one of the new 2024 election intakes, Paul Foster, said this had not succeeded.

Rebuilding confidence

"Unfortunately, after much reflection, the prime minister's speech yesterday did little to reassure me that he has the vision needed to reconnect with the country and rebuild public confidence under his leadership," he said.

"It pains me to say this because I am a loyal person by nature, and I do not come to this conclusion lightly. But it is with great regret that I believe the party now needs a change of direction and, ultimately, a new leader."

If Starmer were to leave his post, it would not automatically trigger a general election as the Labour Party has a large majority in parliament, but it would continue a decade-long pattern of leadership change at the top of British government, with previous Conservative Party prime ministers David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss all having been replaced midterm, for differing reasons, and only Rishi Sunak leaving office after a general election defeat.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Visit: An open, rules-based and inclusive order essential

From page 1

History demonstrates that major power confrontation generates negative externalities falling disproportionately on developing economies. Trade disruptions, capital market instability and geopolitical risks erode investor confidence and constrain long-term growth. A predictable China-US relationship is, therefore, a global public good.

High-level political engagement is indispensable. Trump's visit underscores the continuing relevance of top-level diplomacy in stabilizing expectations and reducing misperceptions. Institutionalized dialogue serves as a mechanism for crisis management, trust building and policy coordination.

While structural differences will persist, they can be managed through communication and bounded competition rather than escalating confrontation. Moving beyond zero-sum frameworks toward pragmatic cooperation is essential in addressing transnational challenges.

Three principles should underpin this relationship: peace, mutual respect and development.

First, peace is the precondition for systemic stability and long-term economic growth. Disruptions in China-US relations have immediate spillover effects on global trade, investment and technological collaboration. In a fragile global economy, such disruptions impose severe costs on developing countries with limited resilience.

Second, mutual respect is necessary for sustainable engagement. This entails recognizing differences in political systems, development models and strategic interests, while avoiding policies that escalate tensions. A stable relationship requires both sides to exercise strategic restraint and prioritize long-term systemic stability over short-term tactical gains.

Third, development must remain central to global governance. China has advanced this priority through the Global Development Initiative, which refocuses international cooperation on poverty reduction, food security, climate action and innovation-driven growth. Increased China-US coordination in development financing and resource alignment would strengthen implementation, particularly in under-resourced regions.

This approach is consistent with the broader concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, which emphasizes interdependence, shared prosperity and cooperative security. It rejects zero-sum competition in favor of collective responses to transnational challenges, placing coordination and mutual benefit at the center of international engagement.

The implications of China-US relations extend deeply into the international system. For developing countries, preserving an open, rules-based and inclusive order is essential. Multilateral institutions remain critical platforms for coordination. As leading stakeholders, China and the US share a responsibility to strengthen these institutions rather than fragment them.

Climate change illustrates the strategic necessity of such cooperation. As the world's two major carbon emitters with different historical responsibilities and development stages, China and the US are indispensable to any credible global climate strategy. Coordinated action in clean energy deployment, climate finance and technological innovation can generate substantial positive spillovers. Conversely, policy divergence can significantly undermine global mitigation efforts.

Equally critical is the stability of the international financial and trading system. Fragmentation into competing blocs reduces efficiency and heightens systemic risk. Constructive engagement between China and the US can help sustain international order principles while mitigating the risks of strategic decoupling.

While strategic differences remain a structural feature, substantial scope exists for functional cooperation in areas such as public health, scientific research, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Expanding such cooperation generates tangible benefits while serving as a stabilizing force.

For developing countries, the stakes are immediate. Their core priorities are directly shaped by the external environment created by major powers. Stability in China-US relations is a practical determinant of development outcomes.

Trump's visit to China represents a timely opportunity to reaffirm shared responsibilities and advance a constructive relationship. By institutionalizing dialogue, exercising strategic restraint and prioritizing development-oriented cooperation, China and the US can move beyond destabilizing frictions. By doing so, they will contribute to a more stable, inclusive and development-focused international order.

The author is a former minister of tourism of Brazil, a distinguished professor at Tsinghua University and a professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen). The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Peace deal hopes dim as deadlock continues

Nuclear tensions deepen amid stalled US-Iran negotiations, surging oil prices

By **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE, and **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong

Hopes for a peace deal with Iran faded on Tuesday after the United States said a truce was "on life support", as Tehran rejected a US proposal and hinted that a possible retaliation over further US-Israeli strikes could be uranium enrichment to 90 percent purity.

US President Donald Trump said on Monday Iran's counteroffer has put the April 8 ceasefire at severe risk.

"I would call it the weakest right now, after reading that piece of garbage they sent us. I didn't even finish reading it," he told reporters.

"The ceasefire is on massive life support," he said.

In response, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said his country's armed forces stand ready to deliver a lesson-teaching response to any act of aggression.

"There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal," he said in a post on X on Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said Iran could enrich uranium up to 90 percent purity — a level considered weapons-grade — if its territory faces fresh military attacks. "We will review it in Parliament," he said.

The latest twists further roiled global energy markets, already disrupted by the Middle East crisis and the overlapping blockades around the Strait of Hormuz — a critical oil and gas transit route that carries about 20 percent of the world's oil shipments.

The benchmark Brent crude oil futures extended gains on Tuesday, climbing to almost $108 a barrel.

"The energy supply shock that began in the first quarter is the largest the world has ever experienced," Amin Nasser, CEO and president of Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco, told investors, warning it would take months for markets to rebalance even if the strait opens immediately.

"If its opening is delayed by a few more weeks, then normalization will last into 2027," he said.

The US Department of Energy said on Monday it is releasing 53.3 million barrels of crude from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to energy firms under a global arrangement aimed at easing supply tightness, Reuters reported.

Respective demands

Washington had proposed an immediate halt to fighting before negotiating more divisive issues, including Iran's nuclear program. Tehran, however, demanded a full end to hostilities across all fronts — including in Lebanon, where Israel was continuing military strikes.

Iran also insisted on its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, compensation for war damages and an end to the US naval blockade, among other preconditions.

Negotiations between Iran and the US are stuck in a deadlock amid an extremely dangerous situation, Giorgio Cafiero, a Washington-based political analyst, told Al Jazeera.

"The understatement of the century is that the ceasefire is very fragile," he said, adding any "slight miscalculation" could trigger a protracted conflict that could eventually spiral into a messy quagmire.

Iran, the US and Israel reached a ceasefire last month following 40 days of hostilities sparked by joint US-Israeli strikes on Feb 28.

Following the truce, Iranian and US delegations held one round of peace talks in Pakistan on April 11 and 12, which yielded no breakthrough. In recent weeks, the two sides have exchanged multiple proposals aimed at ending the conflict, mediated by Pakistan.

In Lebanon, local leaders have urged the US ambassador in Beirut to press Israel to halt its aerial bombardment. Israeli strikes on a town in southern Lebanon killed six people and wounded seven others, the National News Agency reported on Tuesday, as fighting continued despite a ceasefire agreement.

Lebanon's Health Ministry told Agence France-Presse on Tuesday Israeli strikes have killed 380 people since the ceasefire began on April 17.

A ministry official said that "380 people, including 22 children and 39 women, have been killed in strikes on Lebanon since the ceasefire came into effect", out of a total of around 2,900 people killed since the war erupted on March 2.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said on Tuesday that Israel sent its homegrown Iron Dome anti-missile batteries, along with personnel to operate them, to the United Arab Emirates. The UAE did not immediately comment on his remarks.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

Love amid ruins



Palestinian brides and grooms gather for a mass wedding organized by Turkiye's IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation in Gaza City on Monday, offering a rare moment of celebration amid the devastation of conflict. MAJDI FATHI VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

RUSSIA

Moscow welcomes EU discussions on dialogue

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that discussions in Europe on the need for dialogue with Russia were a positive development, though the situation is still in initial stages. Russian President Vladimir Putin, while responding to questions on Saturday over a potential negotiation mediator between Russia and Europe, said he would prefer former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for the role. Putin said Europeans should choose their own leader, one they trust and who has not made hostile remarks against Russia. "It is noteworthy that there is growing talk in Europe about the need for dialogue with Russia," Peskov told state media RIA Novosti. "We welcome this; it is a positive development, but we are still only at the beginning. We will see how things develop from here."

SPAIN

'Work not over' after hantavirus evacuation

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Tuesday that "our work is not over" to contain the hantavirus after evacuations from a cruise ship hit by a deadly outbreak of the illness. The fate of the MV *Hondius* has sparked international alarm after three passengers died in an outbreak of the rare virus, for which no vaccines or specific treatments exist. Yet, health officials have stressed that the global public health risk is low and rejected comparisons to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. "There is no sign that we are seeing the start of a larger outbreak," Tedros told a joint news conference in Madrid with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. "But of course the situation could change, and given the long incubation period of the virus, it's possible we might see more cases in the coming weeks," Tedros said of the Andes variant, which is transmissible between humans.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone forging global ties

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Located beneath snow-capped mountains in Sichuan province, Chengdu is evolving into an international gateway for modern China. At the forefront of this transformation is the Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone, or the CDHT, a pivotal force driving the park city's emergence as a major hub for international exchanges.

The 2026 World Mayors Dialogue is being held in Chengdu until Friday, gathering representatives from 32 cities across 26 countries and five international organizations. Some participants will visit iconic sites such as Tianfu Long Island and Tiexiangsi Water Street in the CDHT to experience the progress of Chinese modernization.

On Thursday, the 2026 Chengdu International Friendship Cities Cooperation and Development Conference will kick off in the zone. Under the theme of "Openness for Win-Win Cooperation, Partnership for Shared Progress", the delegates will conduct in-depth discussions on the future development of cities.

These two high-profile international events further highlight the CDHT's growing significance as a hub for global engagement.

Founded in 1988, the CDHT spans an area of 237.2 square kilometers and was the first national innovation demonstration zone in western China. The zone's integrated circuit industry boasts the largest scale in central and western China. It produces over 60 percent of the world's iPads and 50 percent of MacBooks.

In 2025, the zone achieved a regional GDP of 366.15 billion yuan ($53.87 billion), marking a 6.1 percent year-on-year growth. Its foreign trade reached 550.8 billion yuan, accounting for 53.4 percent of Sichuan's total. It is home to a quarter of Sichuan's listed companies.



The Business and Innovation Centre for China-Europe Cooperation, or the CCEC, in the Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone in Chengdu, capital city of Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

International cooperation

In 2025, the CDHT actively engaged with the international community to attract investment and talent. The zone organized or participated in 28 international delegations involving 164 representatives. These focused on key sectors such as electronic information, biomedicine, high-end equipment manufacturing and the digital economy, engaging with regions including Europe and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The CDHT prioritized upgrading its international cooperative parks in 2025. The zone sent six specialized delegations abroad, including three visits to Singapore to facilitate agreements between its Singapore-Sichuan Hi-Tech Innovation Park, or the SSCIP, and five Singaporean organizations, such as Singapore Polytechnic.

A milestone was reached in October with the inauguration of the SSCIP Singapore Innovation Cooperation Center in Singapore, establishing a dual-center cooperation model between the city-state and Sichuan. The center signed cooperation agreements with more than 30 Singaporean organizations, including DBS Bank and InnoForge Ventures, to foster closer bilateral ties.

Collaboration with South Korea also deepened last year. The CDHT hosted the Golden Panda Innovation and Entrepreneurship Global Competition in the country and established an offshore incubator system by signing agreements with 19 South Korean innovation centers. This year will see the launch of a Seoul product pavilion in the CDHT and the establishment of an innovation exchange center in Seoul, fostering two-way industrial and market collaborations.

The zone has also ramped up activities in Japan, organizing more than 30 China-Japan trade and culture events in 2025. These efforts led to partnerships including one between China's National Innovation Center for UHD Video Technology and Japan's Canon.

The Business and Innovation Centre for China-Europe Cooperation in the CDHT introduced more than 10 new initiatives in 2025, including partnerships with organizations such as the Sichuan Philharmonic Orchestra and Complutense University of Madrid.

Supporting enterprises

In 2025, the CDHT addressed businesses' needs to "go global" and attract international resources through its innovative Foreign Affairs Supporting Enterprises Program. The program provided comprehensive policy outreach, delivering 11 workshops on APEC Business Travel Cards, consular protection, invitations for foreign nationals and more.

Business travel services were streamlined through a "green channel" with dedicated personnel and full-process tracking. This facilitated the issuance of more than 60 APEC Business Travel Cards and 290 foreign expert invitations, ensuring smooth talent mobility.

In addition, enterprise support was extended directly to companies. The CDHT has established a robust response mechanism by collaborating with the local foreign affairs office, immigration and police. In 2025, it provided tailored solutions for over 300 export-oriented businesses through on-site visits.

The Singapore-Sichuan Hi-Tech Innovation Park hosts more than 16,000 high-tech enterprises. These include 100 foreign-invested companies such as NCS and Medtronic.

A representative from the CDHT's international cooperation and investment promotion bureau said: "In the process of supporting enterprise development, we have identified several common challenges, such as low efficiency in connecting local resources and the lack of an internationalized community atmosphere." To address these issues, the CDHT launched an international service center in January to enhance services.

The center integrates government, industry and lifestyle functions into a 3,500-square-meter space. It enables more accessible administrative services by consolidating municipal, district and neighborhood-level service items, covering immigration, tax registration and property documentation. Nearly 350 processes can be completed through one service window, which provides bilingual services.

A key feature of the center is its cross-border industrial service corridor, which houses six platforms for trade services, cross-border finance, international talent and intellectual property. It offers life-cycle support for local companies expanding abroad and foreign enterprises entering Chengdu.

The center also prioritizes cultural exchanges and lifestyle services by establishing spaces for exhibition and communication. Southeast Asian-style markets, cafes and a dedicated section featuring Southeast Asian books have been set up to foster a sense of belonging. A Singapore-Sichuan academy, an innovative art space and a singles club will also be launched.

For expatriates, the CDHT is continuously improving their quality of life through its international service center. Integration programs, such as the Home in CDHT series, hosted over 20 events such as Dragon Boat Festival celebrations and fashion salons in 2025. Hundreds of foreigners participated.

Gateway to China

The CDHT has developed dedicated programs to elevate its role in international exchanges. These include the industry-focused CDHT Dialogue, the culture-oriented CDHT Salon and the CDHT Tour for foreign delegations. By hosting over 170 high-profile events in 2025, including investment promotions in Singapore, London and Frankfurt, the CDHT's international influence and appeal as a hub for business and culture have grown further.

In 2025, the zone played host to important dignitaries, including heads of state, and delegations of government officials and business executives from Central and Eastern Europe. This year, the zone organized industrial exchange activities, such as the China (Chengdu)-Switzerland biomedical industry exchange in January. Cultural events included a theater performance of Shakespeare and a Joan Miro art exhibition in April, celebrating the diverse collaborations between China and Europe.

In a historic first, the CDHT established a sister-city relationship with Municipio I of Rome, Italy, marking its initial step into formalized international city partnerships. This development further solidifies the zone's position in global cooperation networks.

As the CDHT continues to push the boundaries of international communication, it stands as a shining example of China's progress on the world stage. The zone's focus on cross-border partnerships, enterprise empowerment and cultural exchange ensures it will remain a key player in fostering international cooperation and driving global engagement.

ADVERTORIAL

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COMMENT

Editorials

'Gray rhino' of Japan's remilitarization is wildly charging over regional order

There is something revealing about the debate now convulsing Japan's ruling establishment over whether China should formally be called a "threat" in the drafting of the country's new security documents that are scheduled to be deliberated next month.

Tokyo's political class already behaves as though China is a "threat". The unresolved question is whether Japan is ready to say aloud what its policies already presume.

Officially, the Sanae Takaichi government still speaks the language of a "strategic relationship of mutual benefit" with Beijing. Japanese diplomats continue to invoke the old formula of pursuing a "constructive and stable relationship" with China. Takaichi herself insists she is trying to keep the channels of dialogue "open".

Yet governments are judged by budgets, deployments, doctrines and alliances. And on that score, Japan's trajectory does not accord with its words.

Worse, Tokyo even attempts to hold Beijing accountable for tensions in bilateral relations that are, in fact, of its own making.

Against that backdrop, the current dispute inside the Liberal Democratic Party over whether China should be labeled a "threat" resembles less a substantive policy disagreement than an exercise in political cosmetics. In 2022, Japan's National Security Strategy already described China as "the greatest strategic challenge" Japan has ever faced. In its Diplomatic Bluebook released in April, the Japanese government effectively downgraded China-Japan relations.

But the more important reality is that Tokyo's conduct has long since outrun its rhetoric.

That is why the supposedly "moderate" voices inside the Japanese establishment deserve closer scrutiny. Those warning against provocative wording targeting China might not be voicing rationality. Their concern may be with avoiding a backlash that could complicate Japan's advancing of its neo-militarism.

In other words, they object not to the destination, but to the visibility of the journey. This matters because Japan has traveled this road before.

The parallels with the ideological evolution of Japanese militarism in history are difficult to ignore. Japan's descent into catastrophe did not begin with Pearl Harbor. It started much earlier — with the gradual fusion of nationalism, historical mythmaking, elite insecurity and militarized politics.

Today's rhetoric is simply old wine in a new bottle. After all, the Takaichi government has already expanded offensive military capabilities, promoted missile cooperation abroad, relaxed arms-export rules and openly discussed preparedness for a prolonged "emergency", including setting up a centralized, prime-minister-led command hub for intelligence gathering and analysis. Japanese officials are now pushing for restoring wartime-style military ranks inside the Self-Defense Forces.

Viewed collectively, these moves reveal something larger: the erosion of Japan's postwar system that emerged from the ashes of Japanese imperialism. That is precisely why the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials — which fell on May 3 this year — matters.

The tribunal's significance was never confined to punishing individual war criminals such as Hideki Tojo. Its deeper purpose was to delegitimize the ideological machinery that had enabled militarism itself: emperor absolutism, historical revisionism, expansionist nationalism and the mythology of victimhood.

The pattern of the Takaichi government's fomenting of neo-militarism is historically familiar: cultivate fear, centralize authority, glorify sacrifice, exaggerate external threats and redefine expansion as self-defense.

In history, Japan's invasion of its neighbors obstructed the region's development; today the right-wing forces in Japan again threaten the very order on which the Asia-Pacific has prospered after the war. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun warned on Tuesday, the "gray rhino" of Japan's remilitarization is charging straight toward the region.

The right-wing forces in Japan shamelessly portray the nation not as a historical aggressor requiring vigilance, but as a perpetually endangered "democracy" forced into reluctant militarization by "hostile neighbors". That narrative inversion — aggressor recast as victim — is central to their obfuscation of intent. The danger for Japan is therefore not primarily external but from within: the erosion of historical memory, the normalization of ideological nationalism and the steady abandonment of postwar restraint in favor of the romanticism of assertive "self-defense".

History rarely repeats itself precisely. But nations that convince themselves they have transcended history and therefore no longer need to reflect on it are often the ones most vulnerable to reenacting it.

Code of conduct requires sincerity to finalize

The 48th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations concluded in Cebu, the Philippines, last week with the release of a statement underscoring the need for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea grounded in international law.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, at a subsequent news conference, expressed optimism that this long-sought agreement could be finalized within the year.

While the COC is welcome, achieving it requires unwavering focus and, crucially, an end to actions that undermine the very trust the document seeks to build.

Over the past year, cooperation in the South China Sea has maintained stable momentum with peace, cooperation and friendship being the general consensus of regional countries. Provocations and attempts to undermine that consensus go against the regional will.

China insists that peace, cooperation and friendship constitute the new narrative for the South China Sea. It has engaged in in-depth discussions with Indonesia regarding joint maritime development, held bilateral dialogues on maritime issues with Malaysia, and carried out cooperation on the sustainable development of fisheries with Vietnam.

Apart from such concrete actions, robust institutional safeguards are still needed. Building upon the continued and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, consultations on the COC have now entered a critical stage, with all parties looking forward to concluding the negotiations.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday, formulating the COC is an important measure for implementing the DOC, and also an important agreement between China and ASEAN countries. It will help the parties better manage differences, advance cooperation and keep the South China Sea peaceful and stable.

China is engaging in close consultations with ASEAN countries on the text of the COC and is determined to work alongside all parties — by overcoming external interference and bridging differences while seeking common ground — to reach a consensus as soon as possible, thereby establishing a practical and effective framework for all parties to manage differences, enhance mutual trust and promote cooperation.

To reach an agreement on the COC at an early date, the parties concerned need to stick to the shared goals of peace and development, focus on common ground and resist disruptions from parties outside the region.

China also hopes that the Philippines — during its tenure as this year's rotating chair of ASEAN — will recognize the responsibilities it bears, resist the temptation of pursuing narrow self-interests, demonstrate the sense of responsibility expected of it, and play a positive and constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability.

As China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong has stated on several occasions at the UN Security Council, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, together with relevant international treaties and customary international law, form the basis of the modern international maritime order. States should interpret and apply the convention in complete good faith and refrain from selectivity and double standards.

China has always been a defender and builder of the rule of law in the international maritime sphere, defending the integrity and authority of the convention with concrete moves.

A code of conduct that truly serves the region cannot be built on consensus when the Philippines persists with its provocative territorial incursions. The upcoming months offer a narrow window of opportunity. Manila should make the correct choice between walking down a path of escalating tension with the collusion of outside forces or translating its optimism into real actions aimed at completing the COC this year.

The COC will be a common roof that can shelter all only if it is built by everyone. The region has waited too long. The time for sincere cooperation is now.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 692 0900 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Peace, development, win-win cooperation trends of the times

At a moment when much of the international system appears trapped between geopolitical fragmentation and economic uncertainty, US President Donald Trump's three-day state visit to China starting on Wednesday offers something fundamental: a chance for the world to consider what kind of diplomacy effectively answers the call of the times.

China's answer is diplomacy that upholds the principles of peace, development and win-win cooperation.

Beijing's foreign-policy vocabulary, such as mutual respect, equity, shared benefits, common development and peaceful coexistence, reflects its perspective that peace, development and win-win cooperation are the unstoppable trends of the times.

The world is suffering from multiple deficits simultaneously: a deficit of development, as inequality widens between and within nations; a deficit of peace, as wars and proxy conflicts proliferate; a deficit of governance, as international institutions struggle to keep pace with technological and geopolitical change; and perhaps most dangerously, a deficit of trust.

Looking back at history, each era has produced its own dominant diplomatic philosophy.

The Westphalian system established sovereign equality as the organizing principle of international relations. The multilateralism and economic interdependence of the post-1945 order arose from the ashes of World War II.

The Cold War era, by contrast, was largely governed by ideological rivalry and bloc confrontation.

Today's world faces a complex set of challenges: climate change, technological disruption, uneven development and distrust between major powers.

That reality helps explain why China's emphasis on communication and the managing of differences resonates with so many countries. Peace, development and win-win cooperation benefit all countries. These principles answer the genuine need for an international framework that privileges coexistence over confrontation and shared growth over zero-sum rivalry.

Modern international relations were not built on the fantasy of absolute victory. The Westphalian system rested on a simpler insight: sovereign states must coexist despite profound differences. Stability depended not on uniformity, but on mutual recognition.

The post-1945 international order deepened that logic. The United Nations system, imperfect though it remains, was founded on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, multilateral cooperation and peaceful dispute resolution. Its central lesson was painfully earned: attempts to secure absolute security for some produce insecurity for others.

That is why China's principled emphasis on mutual understanding, fair global governance, shared security and inclusive development as set out in the global initiatives it has put forward have been welcomed by so many countries across the world.

The diplomatic framework of Beijing aligns with a broad international desire for stability over confrontation and development over ideological crusades.

Meanwhile, the development of China provides other economies, including the United States, with opportunities. The commitment to innovation and opening-up enshrined in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) indicates that China will continue to share its development dividends with the world.

Despite the divisive attempts of some forces, the world's two largest economies remain deeply intertwined and the two countries are still interconnected and globally consequential in science and technology. The global challenges of climate change, artificial intelligence governance, financial stability, supply chain stability and the energy transition cannot be meaningfully addressed without cooperation and coordination between China and the US.

Both countries understand this, as does the rest of the world. In these turbulent times, the world is looking for reassurance that cooperation remains not only possible but more importantly necessary between the two countries, as the stable and healthy development of Sino-US relations serves the common interests and expectations of the international community.

The choice facing Washington is cooperation grounded in communication or competition driven by miscalculation. The world looks to it to answer the call of the times with a reciprocal commitment to peace, development and win-win cooperation.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Potential of sports events industry to be fully tapped

Editor's note: *The sports events industry is booming in China. Li Hai, dean of the School of Economics and Management at Shanghai University of Sport, spoke to Economic Daily about the growth of the industry, and what needs to be done to address the challenges it faces. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Data from the Chinese Professional Football League show that its three-tiered leagues attracted a total attendance of 8.96 million in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 18 percent. Attendance at the Chinese Super League matches was more than 6 million, a 32.54 percent year-on-year increase.

The Formula 1 Chinese Grand Prix 2026, which was held in Shanghai, attracted more than 230,000 spectators, with ticket revenue increasing by over 30 percent year-on-year. Grassroots sports events, such as the Jiangsu Football City League, or "Suchao", have also gained widespread popularity, driving marked growth in consumption in local tourism, catering and accommodation sectors.

The booming consumption of sports events in China is a result of the synergy of multiple factors. The government is striving to build the sports industry into a pillar of the economy. According to a 2025 guideline on unleashing the potential of sports consumption and further promoting high-quality development of the sports industry, China aims to nurture a number of globally influential sports companies and events and increase the value of the industry to over 7 trillion yuan ($1.03 trillion) by 2030.

The attitude of people toward sports events has also changed. Watching and participating in sports have become popular leisure activities. The number of international and domestic sports events hosted by China has also increased. In 2025, Shanghai hosted 182 sports events, 69 of which were international games. The use of digital technology has made these events more accessible to the public.

Unleashing the potential of the development of sports events in China still faces challenges. There is a need for better integration of sports with culture, tourism and commerce. Event approval procedures are complicated, and not many domestic sports events are truly influential and sustainable.

To achieve the 2030 goals, strengthen the sports industry and advance the high-quality development of sports events industry, several measures are needed. A multi-department collaborative mechanism led by the sports authorities should be set up to offer better services, strengthen the supervision of sports events and promote the upgrade of relevant consumption. The government needs to continue supporting the sustained growth of top-tier international events, fostering domestic events and building a system that covers multiple types and levels of sports.

Greater efforts are also needed to cultivate event management talent, improve the standards and rules for event operation, and enhance the ability of referees. Also, sports events should be combined with other sectors to boost their business. Local authorities should be encouraged to leverage their cultural resources and create special sports events, operate the events in a "whole-process" manner, and make them cultural symbols that drive the local economy.

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VIEWS

Marcus Vinicius De Freitas

Sino-US meeting with global implications

United States President Donald Trump's visit to China and his expected meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping will inevitably generate headlines centered on tariffs, trade balances, semiconductors, technological contention, and the question of strategic competition between Washington and Beijing.

Yet interpreting this encounter solely through the prism of bilateral tensions would be to misunderstand its deeper historical significance.

What is truly at stake is not merely the future of Sino-US relations, but the gradual emergence of a different understanding of the international order itself.

This is not a meeting between two big countries situated in the Northern Hemisphere, but in many respects a North-South encounter.

Although geographically located in the north, China is widely seen as a leading voice of what might be called the "New South."

Its historical trajectory, developmental experience, and civilizational memory place it closer to many of the aspirations, anxieties, and ambitions of developing nations than to the traditional Western powers that shaped the post-World War II order.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

China remembers poverty, fragmentation, foreign occupation and underdevelopment not as distant historical abstractions but as important components of its modern national identity. That memory continues to influence how Beijing approaches the world today.

For many nations across Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and parts of the Middle East, China's rise demonstrates that economic modernization outside the traditional Western political model is possible.

The expansion of BRICS, the growing attraction of alternative financial institutions such as the New Development Bank, and the demand for Chinese infrastructure investment across the developing world all reflect a broader search for greater strategic autonomy in international affairs.

Beijing's international discourse resonates across much of the developing world because it is anchored primarily in the language of development, connectivity, sovereignty, and long-term economic transformation rather than ideological conversion.

In many capitals of the Global South, the central geopolitical question is no longer which power offers the most attractive political doctrine, but which partnerships are best positioned to deliver infrastructure, industrial growth, technology transfer, educational opportunities, and economic stability.

Development itself has increasingly become the new language of sovereignty.

That is why the significance of the Trump-Xi meeting extends far beyond bilateral negotiations.

The world today confronts enormous collective challenges: the future of free trade, the preservation of global peace, the governance of artificial intelligence, climate adaptation, energy security, supply-chain resilience, and the ethical dilemmas generated by the rapid expansion of scientific and technological frontiers.

None of these questions can be resolved through unilateralism or through geopolitical domination that characterized international politics earlier.

The great strategic question of the 21st century is no longer who possesses the strongest army, but whose vision of the future is more attractive, more inclusive, and more capable of producing prosperity. China understands this transformation very well.

Beijing has consistently promoted concepts such as the "community with a shared future for humanity", an idea frequently dismissed in parts of the West as rhetorical abstraction.

Yet behind the slogan lies an attempt to articulate an alternative philosophical foundation for global governance — one less centered on ideological universalism and more focused on coexistence, economic integration, connectivity, and civilizational pluralism.

Naturally, critics question whether Chinese practice always aligns with Chinese discourse. Across large parts of the developing world, there is growing fatigue with an international order that is excessively concentrated in a limited number of Western capitals.

Many emerging nations increasingly seek participation rather than subordination; partnership rather than tutelage.

The appeal of multipolarity stems not necessarily from anti-Western sentiment, but from the perception that the existing system has failed to adequately accommodate the aspirations of the broader developing world.

This does not signal the decline or irrelevance of the US. American innovation, financial influence, military reach, scientific leadership, and cultural power remain extraordinary assets.

Nor should the Trump-Xi encounter be romanticized as a coherent ideological dialogue between North and South.

The US president hardly represents the traditional liberal internationalist establishment that dominated Western diplomacy after the Cold War.

Political rise of the US president, in many respects, reflects growing dissatisfaction within the West itself regarding the costs and contradictions of globalization.

The growing inequality within Western societies is driven more by the societies' uneven wealth distribution than by the effects of globalization.

That is precisely what makes this meeting historically revealing. Both countries, in different ways, embody competing responses to a world in transition.

For the Global South, the symbolism of the meeting matters as much as any agreement eventually signed behind closed doors.

It reflects the growing recognition that emerging nations can no longer be treated as peripheral actors in the global conversation.

The world is entering a new phase in which legitimacy will depend less on the capacity to instill fear and more on the ability to inspire confidence, deliver development, and accommodate others' aspirations.

That may ultimately prove to be the deeper significance of the encounter between presidents Trump and Xi — and perhaps one of the defining lessons of the emerging international order of the 21st century.

The author is a visiting professor at the China Foreign Affairs University, and a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Ker Gibbs

What Xi-Trump meeting could achieve

When United States President Donald Trump arrives in Beijing on May 13 for the summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, it will mark his second visit to China as president, following his first trip in 2017. The symbolism is significant.

I have spent most of my adult life in China, and served as president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai during the Barack Obama, Trump, and Joe Biden administrations.

I have watched the US-China relationship from close range — through periods of genuine cooperation and periods of serious strain.

I have seen what works and what doesn't. And I have tried to capture those lessons in my recent book about China.

The most important lesson is also the simplest: when the US and China cooperate, both countries benefit, and the global economy prospers. When they don't, everyone loses.

The summit comes at a difficult moment that is becoming even more complicated. A trade war that began years ago has damaged both sides more than either is ready to admit.

Tariffs have disrupted supply chains, raised costs for consumers and businesses, and generated uncertainty that keeps investors on the sidelines. China has adapted — its exports have diversified, its domestic market has absorbed some of the pressure — but the costs are real. US farmers, retailers, and technology companies have felt them too.

The conflict in Iran has added a new layer of complexity. The war has reshaped the diplomatic landscape in ways that cannot be ignored.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20 percent of the world's oil and gas supplies passed, has been effectively closed.

China and the US have different approaches to the crisis. That is an uncomfortable position for a relationship that needs stability.

Beijing has made its intentions clear: Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beijing last week and called for a comprehensive ceasefire.

Beijing does not want chaos in the Middle East. It does not want a closed Strait of Hormuz. It does not want the disruption to global trade that this conflict produces. On these points, Chinese and US interests are more aligned than the headlines suggest.

This is important, because the two countries have worked constructively together in the past, including on Iran.

In 2015, the US, China, Russia and European partners negotiated an Iran nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. After the deal was signed, the then US president Barack Obama's Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz made a stop in Shanghai, where he met with a group from the American Chamber of Commerce.

Moniz was one of the key negotiators, along with the then US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and then-Secretary of State John Kerry, and told us that China had played an important and constructive role throughout more than two years of difficult negotiations.

This example demonstrates that the US and China can work together to resolve difficult problems of mutual concern even in an environment defined by competition and mistrust.

On the conflict in the Middle East, as Iran's largest trading partner, Beijing's voice carries weight in Tehran.

When China's foreign minister makes it clear that a resumption of hostilities is unacceptable, it conveys a distinct and constructive perspective.

Beijing has demonstrated a willingness to use this influence positively. The summit represents an opportunity to build on this role.

What are the realistic expectations from the talks?

A tactical trade agreement is the most likely outcome: agricultural purchases, energy commitments, adjustments to tariffs in specific categories, perhaps progress on rare earth supply chains. These are useful and genuinely important.

Businesses on both sides need predictability. Markets need stability. The Busan agreement of October 2025 provided a framework; the Beijing summit can build on it.

Progress on structural questions is important. Neither side has yet articulated a plan for how the two economies are supposed to coexist over the long term — the role of US companies in the Chinese market, the governance of technology competition, the rules by which two very different economic systems can coexist without constant friction.

We need a mutual understanding of what the relationship is for, and where it is supposed to go.

During the earlier days of reform and opening up, the path forward seemed clear: integration, mutual prosperity, and growing interdependence. The context of the relationship has evolved fundamentally.

The absence of a shared map is, in my view, the biggest obstacle to a stable relationship — more than any specific trade dispute or technology restriction.

The vacuum is filled with suspicion, and suspicion produces exactly the kind of zero-sum thinking that makes every problem harder to solve.

I have spent four decades watching this relationship evolve — from the optimism in the past to the competition of today.

The relationship is more resilient than its worst moments suggest, and more fragile than its best moments imply.

The two countries are bound together by trade, by history, and by the shared reality that neither can afford the consequences of genuine rupture.

The summit can help do something valuable: demonstrate that both sides prefer management to confrontation, stability to chaos, and dialogue over angry isolation.

In a relationship so consequential, that is not a small achievement. It is the foundation on which everything else must be built.

The author is the former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and an executive-in-residence at the Center for Asia Pacific Studies in the University of San Francisco.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Yu Minming and Yan Xuedong

Chinese expertise supports high-quality BRI cooperation

By bringing world-class experts to Southwest Jiaotong University, Danish scholar Frede Blaabjerg, a 2025 recipient of the China Friendship Award and chief expert of the university's "111" innovation base for railway electrification and automation, has helped build a premier international academic team.

For an institution with a 130-year legacy in rail transportation, internationalization has become a two-way track: it involves welcoming global talent while projecting its own expertise onto the global stage.

In advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, universities need to transcend their roles as mere classrooms or technical exporters. They have to become dynamic nexuses that weave together education, innovation, talent and global standards.

To this end, Southwest Jiaotong University has engineered a multi-dimensional global strategy, a five-fold framework that integrates education, science, talent, standards and services into a singular engine for international development.

The success of high-quality BRI cooperation rests upon coordinated development, and at the heart of that coordination are people.

As the primary engines of talent cultivation, universities must respond to the needs of partner countries by establishing prestigious educational brands and cross-border training platforms.

In doing so, they enable the fluid flow of resources, fostering the high-level, interdisciplinary talent essential for today's mega-projects.

For universities specialized in rail, this necessitates capitalizing on their unique heritage and technical prowess. Such institutions should center their efforts on consolidating premier educational resources to pilot an open, "one-to-many" model of international cooperation.

In tandem, they need to address the demand for railway professionals in BRI partner countries by developing joint training systems anchored in dual institutions, dual supervisors and dual certification. This framework ought to span the entire academic spectrum, from undergraduate to doctoral studies, while also encompassing non-degree training and professional development.

Education is at its core a commitment to people-to-people connectivity, which serves as the social foundation of high-quality BRI cooperation. In this mission, universities provide far more than professional expertise. They align perspectives and bridge cultural divides, building the human trust that ensures lasting international cooperation.

For these reasons, international talent cultivation belongs within the wider landscape of China's diplomacy and national talent strategy.

This calls for offering rigorous international degree programs. As a vanguard of this mission, Southwest Jiaotong University has spearheaded national initiatives to train elite transportation engineering talent for BRI partner countries.

As the sole institution in Sichuan province authorized by the Ministry of Commerce to nurture BRI talent, the university has trained over 7,000 international students from 58 countries and regions through its English-medium programs. Many graduates have since emerged as leaders in their home countries' transportation sectors, serving as vital links of friendship with China.

Beyond the cultivation of talent, high-quality BRI cooperation requires more than capital and infrastructure. It demands the harmonization of rules and standards. Just as the university prepares the professionals to lead these projects, it also provides the technical frameworks that make cross-border partnership possible.

Through their technical depth and research capacity, universities are uniquely positioned to support the entire value chain from standard-setting to validation, certification, and technical services.

In this capacity, universities can actively support China's pursuit for standards connectivity under the BRI and help establish regional platforms for railway standards coordination. Such efforts allow standards to move past mere regulation, acting instead to facilitate technological compatibility and industrial integration.

The viability of BRI cooperation hinges not only on infrastructure but also on the development of local skills to sustain it. Universities excel at translating China's modernization experience and technical expertise into local capacity. This shift represents the essential transition from providing short-term assistance to driving long-term, self-sustaining growth.

Rail-focused universities need to support capacity building in developing countries by instituting multi-level training systems for government officials, technical specialists and frontline workers.

Such programs reinforce the international railway training network while diversifying cooperation across emerging sectors and collaborative models, ensuring that the BRI partnerships deliver tangible and lasting benefits to local communities.

Scientific and technological innovation is a primary driver of high-quality BRI cooperation. As hubs of research and innovation, universities should utilize their specialized infrastructure and expertise to provide technical advisory services and practical solutions for major projects. In doing so, they transform Chinese scientific achievements into shared progress for the global railway sector.

Achieving this requires deeper integration into global innovation networks. Rail-focused universities are expected to play a more active part in international bodies such as the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the Organization for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), contributing to the formulation of international railway training standards and building joint laboratories with leading overseas institutions. Through sustained cooperation and technical support, they can resolve complex engineering challenges in BRI projects, positioning Chinese railway technology to further advance global development.

High-quality BRI cooperation is a systemic undertaking. The value of universities surpasses the delivery of resources and technology, as it stems from their capacity to build platforms, bring together partners, and maintain the long-term sustainability of collaborative efforts.

Far from being peripheral actors, these institutions stand as architects in building a global community with a shared future.

Moving forward, universities, especially those with distinctive rail expertise, should remain dedicated to national strategic goals while expanding the scope of their international reach.

By doing so, they can bolster high-quality BRI cooperation and help build a more interconnected and prosperous world.

Yu Minming is Party secretary and Yan Xuedong is president of Southwest Jiaotong University.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

LIU WEN AND GUAN ZHONGQI

Real-world solutions

China's cooperation with Belt and Road partners in affordable and adaptable AI paves way for more inclusive and integrated digital governance

As the global artificial intelligence landscape evolves at breakneck speed amid intense races, China is emerging as a key driver of inclusive, affordable digital cooperation. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, it is forging a new model of complementary and mutually beneficial collaboration that links technological strengths with real-world development needs.



Liu Wen



Guan Zhongqi

China's AI industry has expanded rapidly over the past two years, building two core advantages that underpin its growing role in global digital cooperation.

The first is its complete industry chain, supported by massive computing power and vibrant AI application activities that can effectively meet surging global demand.

Data from OpenRouter — a platform widely used by developers to access AI models — for the week from April 6 to 12 show that the weekly token consumption of China's large-scale AI models reached 10.3 trillion, compared with 2.95 trillion of the United States and ranking first worldwide. Notably, Chinese models — Qwen 3.6 Plus, DeepSeek V3.2 and Step 3.5 Flash — are among the world's top AI models. Token consumption serves as a key measure of real-world model deployment, user adoption and industrialization scale.

The second, and more critical, advantage is the unmatched cost efficiency in computing power. Leading Chinese large models deliver performance on a par with top global peers at a fraction of the cost. For example, the inference cost — the core expense of running generative models — of Chinese models such as MiniMax M2.5 and DeepSeek can be less than 20 percent of that of leading international counterparts.

This superior cost-performance ratio forms the cornerstone of China's global AI competitiveness, drastically lowering the threshold for developing countries to access cutting-edge AI technologies. Backed by integrated computing and power supply systems, this breakthrough eases the financial and technical burden of digital transformation, allowing developing economies to embrace digital progress at sustainable and affordable costs.

These advantages align well with a growing global need for AI technologies. On the demand side, the global appetite for AI applications is rising rapidly. Gartner projects that global AI spending could surge to $2.52 trillion in 2026, creating enormous market opportunities for China's growing and scalable AI industry.

China's AI industry has been going global in recent years, with a clear shift in its international focus. Its early global presence focused on infrastructure and hardware, including power facility construction and exports of intelligent robotic products. According to Chinese customs data, in 2025, the country's exports of industrial robots surged 48.7 percent year-on-year, making China a net exporter of industrial robots for the first time.

A defining structural shift took place in 2025, as China moved from hardware exports to delivering full-stack AI-powered services and solutions worldwide. Chinese cloud and AI enterprises have accelerated their global presence, with expanding overseas computing infrastructure and surging international business.

Major Chinese cloud providers have achieved high triple-digit growth in overseas AI-related revenue for consecutive quarters, with rapid expansion in international markets including Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. By the first quarter of 2026, numerous Chinese AI enterprises had established a commercial presence in more than 170 countries and regions, providing affordable computing services, intelligent applications and industry solutions for global users.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

This trend confirms that China is exporting not just physical equipment, but AI solutions that embody large models, intelligent hardware and industry-specific applications, thereby laying a solid foundation for deeper, more integrated global AI cooperation.

For China's AI globalization, economies involved in the BRI represent the most dynamic and promising frontier, especially in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. AI spending in these markets, including local investment in hardware, industry-specific smart solutions and cloud services, is projected to grow at an annual rate above 25 percent in the coming years. This robust demand aligns with China's technological strengths, industrial maturity and practical experience in large-scale AI applications, creating ideal conditions for deepened cooperation.

Unlike traditional one-way technology transfer, China's AI cooperation with partners engaged in the BRI is problem-oriented and tailored to local needs.

To help partners avoid the heavy cost of building independent data centers, China provides flexible token-based computing services customized to national conditions. It deploys targeted AI solutions for key industries and livelihood sectors, and coordinates the planning of computing, network and power infrastructure to support sustainable digital development.

In practice, China's cost-efficient AI has delivered tangible economic benefits and markedly improved operational efficiency across BRI markets. At key China-Europe freight train hubs such as Xi'an International Port Station and Manzhouli Port, AI-powered intelligent scheduling, automated container handling and cross-border digital clearance systems have cut transit times by more than 30 percent, according to China State Railway Group. On Silk Road e-commerce platforms, the use of AI tools has helped small and medium-sized enterprises in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Central Asia and the Middle East increase sales by 30 to 80 percent and significantly improve their profitability, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Beyond short-term economic gains, China's AI partnerships are helping BRI countries build long-term technological capacity and independent digital industries.

Chinese AI solutions can sharply reduce large model training costs for developing countries, enabling them to skip massive upfront infrastructure investment and catch up rapidly in the digital era, according to industry white papers and public data from leading Chinese AI enterprises.

China's AI cooperation also advances inclusive development and public welfare, helping narrow the global digital divide. China has carried out extensive digital technology training and capacity-building programs for partner countries. These programs cover AI agriculture, smart healthcare and cross-border e-commerce, supporting the growth of local digital industries.

Looking ahead, AI cooperation among the BRI partners will advance toward higher quality, sustainability and scalability. Token-based computing services are set to become a core growth engine. JP Morgan predicts in a report published in February that China's AI token consumption will increase by a staggering 369 times by 2030, unlocking huge long-term cooperative potential.

China's AI cooperation with its BRI partners has pioneered a win-win model for global digital governance that is affordable, adaptable and inclusive. By enabling developing nations to fully share in the dividends of AI progress, China also gains vital overseas market feedback that drives continuous technological iteration and industrial innovation.

Together, China and its BRI partners can build an open, inclusive and equitable global digital ecosystem, advance the integrated development of the global digital economy and promote shared prosperity for all countries in the digital age.

Liu Wen is an associate professor at Nanning Normal University and a PhD researcher at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Guan Zhongqi is a member of the Chinese Association for Artificial Intelligence. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

MAO KEJI

Punching above its weight

India's AI Impact Summit demonstrates its knack for turning weakness into diplomatic edge

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government hosted the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit in New Delhi in February, the event was billed as a global gathering for the greater good. Under the theme "Prosperity and happiness for all", it drew world leaders and tech tycoons alike. By the end, 91 countries and international organizations had signed the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact. For a country whose AI industry remains heavily dependent on imported GPUs, whose foundational models lag behind those of the United States and China, and which suffers acutely from a brain drain and automation's disruptions, the feat was impressive. India had somehow seized the agenda on one of the defining technologies of the age.



The same pattern is visible elsewhere. In 2015, India, together with France, launched the International Solar Alliance. Today the organization, headquartered in India, counts more than 100 states as members and is the first intergovernmental body with its secretariat on Indian soil. Yet India's own solar industry, though growing fast in installed capacity, remains technologically dependent — above all on Chinese components and supply chains. Once again, limited hard power has not stopped New Delhi from claiming a prominent seat at the table.

The contrast is striking. In both artificial intelligence and solar energy, India's material capabilities fall well short of its diplomatic reach. What explains this ability to set the global agenda despite modest underlying strength? The answer lies in a deliberate strategy of narrative-shaping, geopolitical positioning and skillful packaging — what might be called India's "diplomatic wrapping" technique.

India's shortcomings in AI are no secret. The country imports virtually all its high-end computing power, its home-grown large language models trail international pioneers, and many of its best engineers work abroad. Yet during the New Delhi summit, the government turned these vulnerabilities into assets through a carefully orchestrated campaign.

First, it leaned heavily on its credentials as a heavyweight of the "Global South". By emphasizing AI applications tailored to developing countries and promoting the idea of "AI dividends for all", India positioned itself as a counterweight to Western-dominated rule-making. The widespread endorsement of the final declaration was partly the result of this framing: many poorer nations saw New Delhi as a more sympathetic interlocutor than Washington or Brussels.

Second, Indian officials shrewdly addressed the "technological anxiety" felt across much of the developing world. Talk of "sovereign AI" — national models attuned to local languages and data-privacy concerns — resonated strongly with countries wary of over-reliance on a handful of dominant platforms. Where Western discourse often dwells on existential risks or cutting-edge competition, India offered a friendlier, more inclusive vision.

Third, the summit served as an investment prospectus. By repeatedly touting India's vast market, youthful population and long-term potential, the government lured commitments from Google, OpenAI, Microsoft and others, as well as domestic conglomerates such as Adani, Reliance and Tata. Plans for massive data-center investments and the allocation of thousands of GPUs to local researchers were presented as proof of seriousness. In effect, India was trading political convening power and future market access for the capital and technology it currently lacks.

Finally, the event was wrapped in symbolism. India cast itself as a trailblazer for the Global South: the first developing country to host a major AI summit on this scale. The message was clear — technological leapfrogging is possible even from a position of relative weakness.

The playbook was tested earlier with the International Solar Alliance. Although India's solar capacity has surged past 100 GW, the industry still relies heavily on imported panels and equipment, much of it from China. The alliance, launched on the sidelines of the 2015 Paris climate conference, aims to mobilize $1 trillion in investment for solar deployment across the "sunshine belt" of developing nations. India provides the headquarters and political leadership, but the financial burden is shared through voluntary contributions and private-sector involvement — a "light-asset" model that minimizes New Delhi's own exposure.

Here too, India skillfully deployed the Global South narrative. It framed solar power as a tool for energy security, poverty reduction and climate resilience, while highlighting the financing and technology barriers faced by poorer countries. Initiatives such as "One Sun, One World, One Grid" helped extend India's reach. Even though China leads the manufacturing of solar hardware, India succeeded in positioning the International Solar Alliance as a Southern-led platform for cooperation rather than a mere technical contest.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

India's approach is neither accidental nor confined to these two domains. Four elements stand out. The first is the identity leverage. With its huge population, political credentials and developing-country status, India is unusually well placed to speak for the Global South at a time when trust in Western-led institutions has frayed. By championing "inclusion", "sovereignty" and "equitable access", New Delhi converts numerical weight and moral framing into bargaining power.

The second is narrative dexterity. India has a talent for reframing weakness as virtue. In AI, it presents "sovereign" models as a democratic alternative to great-power dominance. In solar energy, it portrays itself as a fellow traveler rather than a technological laggard. At the same time, it sells a compelling vision of future returns to attract today's investment.

The third is geopolitical opportunism. India exploits the strategic movements of major powers and Western unease, to widen its room for maneuver. It courts Western capital and technology while burnishing its non-aligned credentials.

The fourth is timing. Both AI governance and the global energy transition are still in flux. New Delhi has moved quickly to occupy the institutional vacuum, building low-cost platforms that deliver high symbolic returns.

India's "packaging strategy" demonstrates that in an era of fluid global governance, soft power, narrative control and convening ability can amplify limited material resources. By creating forums, shaping the conversation and mobilizing coalitions, a country can achieve influence disproportionate to its technological or industrial heft.

Yet there are clear limits. Packaging cannot indefinitely substitute for genuine capability. India's brain drain continues, its technological dependence remains, and the gap with the US and China in frontier AI is wide. The real test for India will be whether it can convert the diplomatic spotlight into durable domestic progress — whether the data centers and laboratories materialize, whether talent begins to flow home, and whether "sovereign AI" becomes more than a slogan.

For other emerging powers, particularly China, the Indian example offers both inspiration and caution. Hard strengths in manufacturing, supply chains and cost control remain formidable assets. But they must be married to persuasive storytelling and institutional entrepreneurship if they are to be fully translated into agenda-setting power. In the contest for global influence, presentation matters — but so does the product inside the wrapping.

The author is an associate researcher at the Department of International Cooperation under the National Development and Reform Commission of China. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS



Vehicles await export from a port in Yantai, Shandong province, on Monday. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Car exports maintain strong momentum in April

By **LI JIAYING**
lijiaying@chinadaily.com.cn

As the country's auto industry further deepens its global footprint, China's automobile exports maintained strong momentum in April, driven by steady shipments of new energy vehicles and accelerated overseas expansion by major domestic carmakers.

China exported around 901,000 vehicles in April, up 74.4 percent year-on-year, including 430,000 NEVs, whose exports more than doubled from a year earlier, according to data released by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers on Monday.

Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the association, said vehicle exports have continued to grow rapidly this year, providing stable support for the broader auto industry. Chen added that the NEV market has maintained steady momentum, with NEVs accounting for 53.2 percent of total new vehicle sales in April.

The export growth comes as Chinese NEV makers continue to play a contributing role in the global market. Data from the China Passenger Car Association show that Chinese brands accounted for 61 percent of the global new energy passenger vehicle market in the first quarter.

"Although lower than the 68 percent peak recorded in 2025, the figure still reflects the country's leading position worldwide," said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the CPCA.

The association said the top 10 overseas markets for Chinese NEV exports in the first quarter were Brazil, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Australia, Germany, Thailand, Spain and South Korea. South America, Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia emerged as the main sources of incremental growth.

The rapid rise of Chinese NEVs, combined with elevated global fuel prices, is accelerating the global shift toward greener consumption solutions. According to CPCA data, the global penetration rate of NEVs continued to rise, reaching 20.2 percent in the first quarter.

The growing demand is also reflected in overseas consumer markets. According to a report by The Straits Times, inquiries for electric vehicles priced below 30,000 euros ($35,241) on Germany's major automotive marketplace Mobile.de jumped 87 percent since early March.

Meanwhile, in the UK, demand for used electric vehicles also surged. Data from Autotrader, the country's largest automotive marketplace, show that inquiries for EVs aged between five and seven years tripled in April compared with a year earlier, significantly outpacing interest in newer and more expensive models.

Against this backdrop, leading Chinese automakers are accelerating their overseas expansion, with the focus transferring from simply exporting products to building localized industrial ecosystems.

BYD is advancing production projects in Hungary and Malaysia, while Chery Automobile recently launched its first overseas regional operation center in Barcelona, Spain. XPeng also said it plans to expand overseas manufacturing capacity this year, targeting markets including Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

At the same time, carmakers are stepping up overseas research and development plans. Xiaomi Auto has identified Europe as its first major overseas market, while Leapmotor and Geely have recently expanded engineering and innovation operations in Germany and other parts of Europe to support long-term global growth.

Firms fire up production for FIFA World Cup

By **ZHONG NAN**
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

With less than a month remaining before the FIFA World Cup 2026 kicks off in Mexico City, a wave of Chinese-made products, from footballs and flags to fan jerseys and drinkware, is already flowing into the tournament's host countries and beyond.

The tournament between June 11 and July 19 will be the first World Cup to feature 48 teams, with matches across 16 cities in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In April, workers at the production workshop of Qingdao Wonderful Flag Industry Co, a Qingdao, Shandong province-based flag maker, were busy sewing and assembling national flags of countries participating in the World Cup.

"On April 1, right after the final World Cup qualifying match concluded and the list of the 48 teams was confirmed, orders flooded in almost immediately," said Xiao Chang'ai, chairman of the company.

According to Xiao, the company is now running at full capacity to fulfill orders for national flags, covering both traditional soccer powerhouses such as Brazil, Argentina and Germany, as well as newly qualified teams making their World Cup debut.

"By the end of March, most flags for traditional powerhouse teams had already been produced and shipped," she said. "But the real challenge for us will begin once the tournament starts in June."

As the competition unfolds, overseas buyers closely track match results and place orders almost in real time, often demanding delivery within just one or two days, Xiao added.

To keep pace with the surge in last-minute demand, the company has all production lines running round the clock, with daily output now exceeding 100,000 flags of various sizes, according to Qingdao Customs.

Ningbo Eco-will Technology Co, a manufacturer of luggage tags, ceramic cups and insulated tumblers in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, saw its exports to the US, Canada and Mexico jump 47 percent year-on-year to 40 million yuan ($5.89 million) in the first four months of 2026, as local sellers actively stocked up on merchandise ahead of the World Cup sales season.

Qiu Chunmiao, the company's foreign trade manager, said the World Cup has significantly boosted the firm's exports of sports-themed products this year, especially insulated tumblers carrying officially licensed soccer team logos.

Ningbo Customs said exports of sporting goods and equipment through Ningbo's ports reached 5.74 billion yuan between January and April, up 11.34 percent on a yearly basis.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China's flexible manufacturing ecosystem offers exporters a clear advantage in responding to short-cycle demand generated by major sporting events.

Wen Congjian, chairman of Yiwu Danna Silk Import and Export Co, a Yiwu, Zhejiang-based apparel maker that designs patented soccer fan jerseys, said Chinese companies are no longer competing solely on volume, but are placing greater emphasis on value-added products.

"With patent protection, we can better protect our designs and lift product prices by around 20 percent," Wen said, adding that the company has secured overseas patents for more than 40 fan jersey designs related to the World Cup.

Yiwu's exports of sporting goods and equipment reached 2.83 billion yuan in the first quarter, up 12 percent year-on-year, data from Yiwu Customs showed.

Recovery of consumer mkt seen accelerating

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Indicators that the country's consumer market is beginning to recover are emerging, and one unlikely measure is the price of fried chicken. At a financial seminar on May 8, Wu Mianqing, CEO of BigOne Lab, said the so-called "KFC Index", which tracks average transaction prices at the fast-food chain across China, is showing signs of recovery nationwide.

Over the past two years, KFC's per-transaction spending has steadily declined, reflecting broader consumer caution: shoppers were purchasing more but paying less. That trend began to stabilize in the fourth quarter of 2025, and Wu sees potential for positive growth in 2026.

"If pricing trends at a foundational food and beverage leader shift, it is often an early signal of consumption recovery," he told the Shanghai Observer.

Macroeconomic data provide further support. Total retail sales of consumer goods in China rose in the first quarter by 2.4 percent year-on-year, accelerating by 0.7 percentage point when compared with that of the fourth quarter of 2025. Economists have debated a "downgrading" of Chinese consumption in recent years, yet the rebound in retail data has prompted a reassessment of that narrative.

Qin Shuo, a financial commentator, told the Shanghai Observer that the apparent softness is more structural than cyclical. While headline CPI growth has remained subdued, he said that consumption is not shrinking — its volume, diversity and complexity continue to expand. Shoppers are spending across a broad range of goods, from high-end imported items to local lifestyle brands.

"Looking at the market in terms of physical goods, there is no downgrade," Qin said. Micro-level indicators also point to recovery in high-end consumption. Wu said that international luxury brands have experienced strong growth in China since the second half of 2025. Warming capital markets and diversified sources of consumer confidence are fueling renewed spending.

Luxury brands are increasingly treating China as a global testing ground. In the third quarter of its fiscal year 2026, ending March 28, Tapestry Group, the parent of Coach, reported 30 percent growth across the Asia-Pacific, with China surging 55 percent year-on-year. The company's net sales rose to $1.92 billion, up 21 percent, while net income jumped 69 percent to $344 million.

China is now Tapestry's largest market outside the United States.

Last quarter, Coach added 2.4 million new customers worldwide, with over 35 percent in the Generation Z segment. The brand has opened more than 350 stores across 90 Chinese cities, spanning tier-1 to tier-4 markets, with plans to expand into another 200 cities.

In addition, Liu Gongrun, deputy director at the CEIBS Lujiazui International Institute of Finance, told the Shanghai Observer that traditional metrics overlook the rapid growth of service consumption. In cities like Shanghai, where services make up roughly 80 percent of GDP, residents are spending on immersive experiences, cross-border livestreaming and other high-engagement offerings. Younger consumers, Liu added, are increasingly driven by cultural resonance and experience rather than by purely purchasing products.

Qin said that the combination of local innovation and demographic shifts has created a new rhythm for Chinese consumption: diversified, rational and innovative.

Nation vows to further trim local govt debt

10 trln yuan bond swap program helps cut hidden arrears to 7.4 trln yuan by '25

By **WANG KEJU**
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China has pledged to accelerate local government debt resolution, declaring that the current five-year 10 trillion yuan ($1.38 trillion) bond swap program is on track and will be completed on schedule.

The latest announcement follows an executive meeting of the State Council, the country's Cabinet, on Saturday, which reviewed progress on the sweeping debt-relief package launched in 2024.

The program, designed to run through 2028, allows local governments to issue bonds to replace outstanding hidden debt — a legacy of off-balance-sheet borrowing that had ballooned to 14.3 trillion yuan by end-2023.

By end-2024, data from the Ministry of Finance showed that hidden debt had fallen to about 10.5 trillion yuan, and according to estimates by Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, it further dropped to roughly 7.4 trillion yuan by late 2025.

As of early May this year, more than 1.3 trillion yuan of local government refinancing bonds had been issued to swap for remaining hidden debt, said local financial authorities.

"The debt-reduction effort has moved to routine supervision. Hidden debt has been sharply reduced, with several provinces completing their annual targets ahead of schedule and some achieving a 'zero hidden debt' goal," Luo said.

The average interest cost on swapped debt has fallen by more than 2.5 percentage points, and the share of high-interest and non-standard debt has declined, freeing up fiscal space for local governments, said the ministry.

The State Council meeting acknowledged that while initial results are encouraging, challenges remain.

Two priority areas for the next phase were identified: clearing overdue payments to enterprises — a persistent drag on business confidence — and managing the operating debt of local government financing vehicles (LGFVs).

"Local governments are still under financial strain, and some are unable to fully resolve arrears owed to businesses," said Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Orient Golden Credit Rating International.

Wang called for continued use of special bonds and other fiscal tools to settle these obligations,

> "Hidden debt has been sharply reduced, with several provinces completing their annual targets ahead of schedule and some achieving a 'zero hidden debt' goal."
>
> **Luo Zhiheng,** chief economist at Yuekai Securities

which he said are essential to "smooth the economic circulation and thus help stabilize the macroeconomy".

Policymakers are also turning greater attention to the operating debt of local government financing vehicles — a new front in the country's campaign to defuse financial risks.

Unlike hidden debt incurred implicitly by local governments, the operating debt of LGFVs arises from market-oriented investment and project activities, and is classified as standard corporate debt. The primary tool for resolving such debt is financial restructuring through banking and capital market institutions, not direct fiscal swaps, Luo said.

"Financing platforms have relatively weak cash flow and profitability. Under certain conditions, their operating debt could require implicit government guarantees. It is necessary to proactively resolve this through financial tools that lengthen maturities and optimize structures."

China, in this year's Government Work Report, has called for greater financial and fiscal support for debt restructuring, along with measures to facilitate the reform and transformation of LGFVs. Under the current resolution plan, many localities are pushing to complete the exit of all financing platforms by June 2027 — a key step to curb new hidden liabilities.

But Luo cautioned that the task is far from finished.

"Exiting the platform in name is not enough. The real challenge is the transition from financing platforms to industrial investment firms. That requires injecting quality assets, integrating local resources and building market-oriented incentives so that these entities can stand on their own."

Road to success



An aerial view shows the newly opened eight-lane elevated section of the G3 Beijing-Taipei Expressway crossing over railway lines in Anhui province, on Monday. The 107-kilometer Hefei-Xuzhou South Section expansion project, partially built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, officially opened to traffic on Saturday, upgrading the once-congested four-lane highway. As a key national transportation corridor connecting North China and the Yangtze River Delta, the project doubles the expressway's traffic capacity to over 80,000 vehicles per day, easing long-standing congestion and providing critical infrastructure support for the revitalization of northern Anhui and the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESS

Embodied intelligence enters real-world tests

Rapid advances in humanoid robotics moving sector away from technical showcases to commercialization

By LI JIAYING
lijiaying@chinadaily.com.cn

China's embodied intelligence sector is moving from technical showcases toward tougher tests of real-world commercialization, as rapid advances in humanoid robotics performance fuel both investor enthusiasm and rising expectations for practical industrial applications.

The trend was on full display at a humanoid robot half marathon in the tech hub Beijing E-Town, where autonomous robot "Lightning" completed the race in April in a net time of 50 minutes and 26 seconds.

The time was faster than the human men's half-marathon world record and cut nearly two-thirds off the 2:40:42 result posted by Tiangong Ultra, last year's robot champion.

The 21.0975-kilometer course featured flat roads, steep slopes, consecutive bends, speed bumps and other complex urban road conditions, including 22 regular curves and several near-90-degree turns, placing high demands on the robots' balance, path planning and joint response speed.

"A marathon on an urban course is an extreme stress test for core robot capabilities including motion control, autonomous navigation, endurance, heat dissipation, environmental adaptability and system reliability," said Liang Hongjun, an official of the intelligent manufacturing and equipment industry division at the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology.

Liang said the marathon provides a standardized task that allows teams to improve technologies around a common goal, complete a full technical route through competition and accelerate the application of results.

At the inaugural event a year ago, 20 teams took part and only six finished, with a completion rate of less than 30 percent. This year, the number of teams surged to more than 100, nearly five times the previous level, while the completion rate exceeded 45 percent.

"The leap in performance is essentially a comprehensive validation of hardware reliability, algorithmic stability and systems engineering capability," said Yan Weixin, chief scientist at Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, adding that this is not a single-point breakthrough of any one technology, but rather the co-evolution of all relevant technical dimensions.

A clear trend seen at this year's half-marathon was the shift from remote-controlled running to autonomous navigation, with robots increasingly able to read the road, avoid obstacles and plan routes without human control.

Among more than 300 participating robots this year, autonomous-navigation entries accounted for nearly 40 percent. By contrast, last year, apart from the champion Tiangong Ultra, which used follow-based semi-autonomous navigation, all other teams relied on remote control.

To encourage more autonomous teams to finish, the race recorded real-time results for autonomous entries, while remote-controlled teams had their times multiplied by a factor of 1.2.

Zhao Mingguo, a researcher at the Department of Automation of Tsinghua University, said this year many teams had successfully transferred autonomous driving technologies from vehicles to robots, using lidar, pure-vision navigation and antennas to improve environmental perception.

"Which technological route will ultimately adapt best to different demands still requires further testing through more real-world tasks," Zhao said. "Over the next one to two years, indoor and outdoor robot navigation technologies are likely to advance even faster."

Behind the robots' improved performance lies rapid progress in core technologies. The winning Lightning robot developed by Chinese smartphone brand Honor delivered a maximum motor torque of 600 newton-meters, compared with about 420 newton-meters for last year's competitors.

In addition, its battery system supported more than 10 kilometers of running on a single charge, requiring only one battery replacement during the entire race.

Thermal management technologies have also advanced significantly. While many robots in last year's half marathon relied on simple air-cooling systems, Lightning adopted a liquid-cooling system capable of sustaining motor speeds above 20,000 revolutions per minute while circulating more than four liters of coolant per minute, similar to how blood circulation regulates human body temperature.

"Judging from the race performance, China's humanoid robots have moved beyond the entry-level stage of 'being able to run' and entered a more practical stage of 'running steadily and farther'," said Hao Lulu, a senior analyst at CCID Consulting.

Hao said some humanoid robots can now handle slopes and sharp turns independently, while leading autonomous-navigation models have real-time obstacle avoidance capabilities and dynamic balance algorithms that support stable posture adjustment at high speed.

Beyond the racetrack, momentum is also building in capital markets. According to the Embodied Intelligence Development Report 2025 released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, China's embodied intelligence and robotics sector recorded 744 investment deals in 2025, with total financing reaching 73.54 billion yuan ($10.82 billion).

Since the start of 2026, total financing in embodied intelligence has climbed to more than 34.5 billion yuan, according to financial information platform Sina Finance, with as many as 23 companies entering the "10-billion-yuan club".

Notably, the national AI industry investment fund made its first move in the embodied intelligence track by participating in a 2.5 billion yuan financing round for major humanoid manufacturer Galbot — a move widely viewed by the industry as a sign that embodied intelligence is increasingly a key component of the country's national AI strategy.

"The robust growth of China's robotics industry is the result of multiple factors working together, including top-level national strategic planning, industrial policy support, and capital market responsiveness," said Yu Huan, a fund manager at Great Wall Fund.

Meanwhile, a growing number of robotics companies are preparing for capital market listings. Unitree Robotics had its STAR Market IPO application accepted by the Shanghai Stock Exchange in March, while companies including Leju Robotics, Deep Robotics and Galaxea are also accelerating restructuring plans ahead of potential listings.

However, even as investment enthusiasm rises, commercialization remains a major challenge for the industry.

According to consultancy firm IDC, global humanoid robot shipments exceeded 18,000 units in 2025, led largely by Chinese manufacturers. Yet more than 85 percent of shipments were concentrated in entertainment performances, education, scientific research and exhibition-oriented applications focused mainly on technology demonstrations and interaction.

Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangoal, echoed that the current challenge remains that although leading companies have announced large-scale deliveries, many shipments still go to universities and research institutions for algorithm research, rather than entering industrial or commercial settings as production tools.

"The industry has yet to form scaled purchasing based on productivity demand," Jiang said.

"In 2025, many so-called commercial orders in the industry were essentially display purchases for public relations and data-collection partnerships, rather than true productivity replacement," said Liu Yang, co-founder of humanoid robot manufacturer Infiforce, in an earlier interview.

"The harsh reality of 2026 is that industrial clients are no longer satisfied with watching your robot do a somersault," Liu said. "They want to know whether a humanoid robot can operate continuously in their factory for three months or six months, whether it can cut costs and improve efficiency, and whether it can generate repeat purchases ... Frankly speaking, no company in the industry has fully passed this proof-of-concept stage. This is a matter of survival."

Liu Dong, founder of XYZ Embodied AI Co, predicted that the industry will see growing divergence in application scenarios this year.

"Applications in industrial and specialized settings are poised for a small-scale boom. In these scenarios, customers are highly willing to pay, and the solutions offer high reusability and fault tolerance," Liu Dong said.

"We may see the emergence of 'hidden champions' in some vertical sectors in this field," he added. "However, for commercial and household scenarios, there is still a final stretch to complete before large-scale adoption truly arrives."





Above: Humanoid robots participate in a half marathon in Beijing E-Town, a hub for high-tech industries, on April 19. The race placed high demands on the robots' balance, path planning and joint response speed. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY
Left: A man trains humanoid robots at a 4S store for heterogeneous humanoid robots in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on May 6. LI JIANAN / XINHUA

Robot rentals set path for mass-market adoption

By LI JIAYING

As humanoid robots increasingly move into real-world settings such as tourism, transportation, retail and security, robot rental services are emerging as a fast-growing business model that many in the industry see as one of the earliest scalable paths toward commercialization.

"Rental services are currently the most suitable entry point," said Li Yiyan, CEO of Botshare, a domestic robot rental platform backed by robotics manufacturer AgiBot. Li said that while humanoid robots still face limitations in generalized capabilities and large-scale commercial adoption remains in its early stages, the long-term opportunities could extend far beyond the hardware itself.

"In the future, when robots enter homes, factories and security services on a larger scale, an enormous aftermarket ecosystem will emerge," Li said. "Secondhand robot trading, maintenance, repair and door-to-door services could all eventually be completed through robot rental platforms."

The rapid rise of the sector is already reflected in business registration data. According to Chinese corporate database platform Qichacha, China registered 38,200 robot rental-related enterprises in 2025 alone, up 55.7 percent year-on-year and marking the highest annual total in the past 10 years. As of April 2, another 9,114 related companies had already been registered nationwide this year.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said humanoid robot leasing has only emerged as a new business model over the past year, but is already creating a new form of the sharing economy.

"Although the user market remains relatively small for now, robot leasing helps expand application scenarios while also generating valuable operational data," Pan said. "That data can in turn help optimize humanoid robot algorithms and product design."

As the market heats up, more platform companies are entering the race.

Late last year, Botshare surpassed 200,000 registered users within three weeks of launch and recorded more than 200 orders per day on average. Chinese e-commerce giant JD has also expanded into self-operated robot leasing services, covering embodied robots, robot dogs and exoskeleton robots.

Yet despite growing attention surrounding the sector, profitability pressures are also becoming increasingly evident.

Daily rental prices for humanoid robots have fallen sharply from around 30,000 yuan ($4,415) in the early stages of the market in early 2025 to roughly 3,000 yuan today, with some entry-level models renting for less than 1,000 yuan per day.

For example, Unitree's G1 humanoid robot is typically rented out at a daily rate ranging from 2,500 yuan to 3,500 yuan, while its dancing-capable U2 model costs around 4,000 yuan per day. The company's robotic dogs are generally priced at 400 to 500 yuan per day for rental services.

At the same time, many companies still rely on an operational model that pairs each robot with a dedicated technician, pushing up labor, logistics and maintenance costs.

"Competition in the industry is no longer simply about who can secure more short-term orders," Li of Botshare said. "The real challenge is who can first establish nationwide service coverage, delivery standards and risk-control systems, becoming the preferred gateway for both clients and manufacturers entering real-world scenarios."

Against this backdrop, the company is already accelerating overseas expansion in search of higher-margin markets.

In April, Botshare initiated its global network covering key regions including Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. The first phase of the expansion spans 13 countries, including Germany, France, the United States, Malaysia, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

Li said the average daily rental price for a humanoid robot in European countries ranges from 2,000 to 3,000 euros ($2,350-3,525), while prices in North America can reach as high as $6,000 per day.

"Regions with higher labor costs naturally have stronger demand for robots to replace human labor," Li said. "Labor costs in Europe and North America are far higher than in China, which means demand for robotics applications could also be greater there."

According to industry analysts, the rise of robot leasing platforms signals accelerating commercialization across the sector.

Li Junlan, senior analyst for robotics and the internet of things at global market consultancy IDC, said the rental model can significantly lower trial and procurement barriers for customers.

"It allows small and medium-sized industry players, as well as companies still in the observation stage, to access and test robotic products more easily, which helps the market expand more quickly," Li said.

Looking ahead, she expects China's robot leasing market to continue expanding in 2026, supported by favorable policy conditions and growing enterprise demand for cost reduction and labor substitution.

"Companies facing pressure to improve efficiency and cope with labor shortages are expected to be most willing to explore human-machine collaboration," she said.

Still, hurdles remain before the sector can achieve sustainable large-scale growth.

Pan said that the industry continues to face challenges such as insufficient standardization in delivery and maintenance services, limited adaptation to specific use scenarios, exaggerated marketing claims and lengthy repair cycles.

"The key to scaling up the industry lies in whether it can build a stable and trustworthy service system," he said.



A boy learns to use a remote control to operate a robot dog developed by Unitree Robotics at a shopping mall in Shanghai on May 5. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

More educators embrace AI as a teaching aid

Report shows digital divide between rural and urban teachers is narrowing

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

A report on primary and secondary school teachers' digital literacy shows that artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a routine teaching aid in China, while the urban-rural gap in digital skills continues to narrow.

The report, released on Tuesday at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Zhejiang province's Hangzhou, is based on a large-sample assessment of 530,000 teachers across 19 provincial-level regions. It found that 14.77 percent of teachers use AI tools every day, while only 3.41 percent have never used them.

According to the report, 85.17 percent of teachers believe AI helps expand teaching resources, and 81 percent say it saves lesson preparation time. AI tools embedded in smart teaching platforms are the most popular, used by 82.68 percent of teachers, followed by general-purpose large language models, used by 76.2 percent.

Most teachers, however, are still in the early stages of exploration. About one-third use AI only for simple assistance, while another third use AI in targeted ways during specific teaching segments. Fewer than 20 percent integrate AI throughout the entire teaching process, and only about 10 percent use AI to innovate teaching models.

The report also highlights a narrowing digital divide between urban and rural educators. On 13 indicators, the gap between the two groups is less than 5 percentage points. In eastern regions, more than 90 percent of teachers hold a positive attitude toward AI, while in central and western regions, the figure exceeds 70 percent.

With regard to training needs, most teachers want practical guidance on resource development, basic operations and application scenarios. Nearly half have called for regulations and ethical guidelines for AI in education.

"When AI handles routine tasks, teachers can focus on nurturing people," said Wang Wei, head of the education bureau of Futian district in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

The district has created hands-on AI toolkits for all 19 subjects and uploaded them to the national smart education platform for teachers in other regions to share. More than 80 workshops have generated over 1,170 AI application cases covering 20 provincial regions, he said.

Futian is also developing a teacher AI literacy framework with 43 observation points and has issued guidelines outlining encouraged, restricted and prohibited AI uses.

"Preparing future teachers for future schools is not simply teaching them how to use tools," Wang said. "It is helping them complete a profound role transformation — from transmitters of knowledge to designers of learning, from followers of technology to trendsetters in human-machine collaboration, and from single-subject teachers to cross-disciplinary innovators."

"What truly determines a nation's competitiveness in the next two decades?" asked Zhao Yixin, a senior executive at Chinese tech giant Huawei.

His answer: the "AI talent dividend", whose foundation lies in classrooms and on teachers' podiums.

Zhao warned of a growing "AI generation gap" — students are using AI while many teachers still explain AI concepts with slides. Huawei has proposed a "teachers first" strategy and built an AI teaching practice platform to help teachers become AI designers, collaboration nodes and decision-makers.

The company has also partnered with Zhejiang Normal University to embed AI literacy into preservice teacher training, compressing days of lesson preparation into hours.

"Teachers will not be replaced," Zhao said. "But teachers who do not use AI may be replaced. The responsibility to educate will always remain in teachers' hands."

Selfless service



The nursing school of Shandong Medical and Pharmaceutical University in Yantai, Shandong province, holds a capping ceremony on Monday to promote the noble spirit of saving lives and selfless devotion. This event preceded the 115th International Nurses Day on Tuesday.
TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Portraits preserve memories of Long March martyrs

NANCHANG — For more than nine decades, Zhong Xindi knew her father mostly through fading memory. He left home when she was 3 to join the Red Army, and later died during the Long March, the historic military maneuver in modern Chinese history. There were no photographs to remember him by, no familiar face for the family to hold onto, only a name, and the knowledge that he never returned.

Then, a little more than a month ago, students from Anhui Normal University brought the 94-year-old a portrait of her father, Zhong Yanzhu, when he was young.

"Dad, I finally saw your face again," Zhong said, stroking the painted cheek with a trembling hand as tears ran down her face.

In Ruijin, East China's Jiangxi province, absences like Zhong's are woven into the memory of the Long March. Over 90 years ago, the county had a population of about 240,000. Some 113,000 people joined the Red Army, and more than 30,000 local soldiers set out on the Long March. More than 10,800 of them died along the way. Many left no photograph behind for loved ones.

Now, a project to paint portraits of Red Army martyrs is giving some families a face to attach to stories passed down for generations. The first batch included 151 portraits, created by college students, not from imagination, but from careful reconstruction.

Qiu Tian, one of the Anhui Normal University students involved in the project, said the team first contacted the relatives of martyrs and studied photographs of their children to determine basic facial contours. They then revised the portraits repeatedly, drawing on family descriptions of the martyrs' eyes, expressions and habitual looks, until relatives felt the likeness was right.

"I thought he would surely smile when he 'met' his family again, so I gave him a slight grin," Qiu said.

Each portrait, he said, was a dialogue across generations, and a form of human care that technology alone could not provide.

The portrait project is part of a broader effort in Jiangxi to bring names, faces and family ties back to Red Army martyrs whose traces were long obscured by war. For decades, finding a martyr's relatives often meant searching genealogies, combing through archives, and interviewing elderly villagers — work that could take years and still yield no results.

That, however, is beginning to change. Big data comparison, DNA identification, cross-provincial archive sharing, and social media have created new paths for verifying long-fragmented records.

Located less than 80 kilometers from Ruijin, in Yudu county, best known as the starting point of the Long March, over 80,000 Red Army soldiers crossed the Yudu River and embarked on a roughly 12,500-km trek later described by American journalist Harrison Salisbury as "a great human epic".

The martyrs' memorial hall in Yudu has registered more than 16,000 identified martyrs. Hundreds of other names, scattered along the Long March route, are still being checked.

In the past, information on a single Jiangxi martyr might have been dispersed across archives in several provinces, making verification slow and uncertain. With a shared database along the Long March route, the process can now be shortened. In 2024, Yudu verified the identities of 47 martyrs who died in the Battle of Xiangjiang River through the mechanism.

Social media has also helped turn once-improbable searches into possible reunions.

After seeing a short video of volunteers searching for the relatives of martyr Yang Yanting, Zhong Baoqing, curator of the Ruijin revolutionary martyrs memorial hall, began reviewing historical documents. He eventually confirmed Yang's hometown and relatives. In September 2025, Yang's nephew came to Ruijin and touched his uncle's name on the martyrs' wall.

"My father had always hoped his elder brother would come home," he said.

According to incomplete statistics, among the over 100,000 martyrs in the province's Ganzhou city, more than 40,000 have been marked as whereabouts unknown. In March, the city launched a campaign to verify more martyrs' information by establishing a unified database after integrating resources from multiple departments.

As this year marks the 90th anniversary of the Long March victory, Jiangxi has pledged to step up efforts to verify martyrs' information and help more of them regain their names, family ties and portraits, according to the provincial veterans affairs department.

At the end of the martyrs' wall in Yudu's memorial hall, a large blank space remains. An inscription explains that tens of thousands of martyrs are still without verified names, and that the emptiness stands for their sacred memory.

Each new nameplate added to the wall and each portrait delivered to a family fills a small part of that blank.

XINHUA

Tajik president honored by Peking University

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

> "We hope more Tajik students will be encouraged by the president's visit to study in China."
>
> **Rustamov Badriddin,** sophomore majoring in sociology at Peking University

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon was awarded an honorary professorship by Peking University on Tuesday in a ceremony highlighting growing academic and people-to-people exchanges between China and Tajikistan.

During the ceremony, He Guangcai, chair of the Peking University Council, conferred a commemorative plaque, while Gong Qihuang, the university's president, presented Rahmon with the honorary certificate.

The honor recognizes Rahmon's role as a national leader and seasoned statesman in advancing bilateral friendship, promoting regional peace and development, and supporting reforms in global and regional governance, according to the university.

Since 2005, Peking University has admitted a total of 47 students from Tajikistan, with six currently studying under Chinese government scholarships, Rahmon said in his speech.

During his visit to China, scheduled to conclude on Thursday, the two sides are expected to sign an agreement to establish a new Confucius Institute at Dangara State University, adding to existing platforms for cooperation, Rahmon said.

Rustamov Badriddin, a sophomore majoring in sociology at Peking University who studied Chinese at the Confucius Institute at Tajik National University, said the number of Tajik students at top Chinese universities remains limited.

"We hope more Tajik students will be encouraged by the president's visit to study in China and enroll in more universities in the future," he said, adding that universities in his home country have been promoting Chinese-language learning and motivating students to pursue further studies in China.

According to Rahmon, 13 universities now offer Chinese-language majors, while a Luban Workshop — a hands-on training center for technical education — has been established at Tajik Technical University.

Liu Qi, a doctoral candidate at the university whose research focuses on Central Asia, said the expansion of student exchange programs and the planned Confucius Institute would provide substantial momentum for youth exchanges.

"President Rahmon's visit sends a strong signal of friendship and helps Chinese students better understand neighboring countries' history, culture and development," she said.

In his speech, Rahmon also expressed hope that more Chinese universities would establish campuses in Tajikistan and deepen cooperation in fields such as engineering, natural sciences and agriculture.

"Agriculture is a highly promising area for collaboration," Liu said, adding that her dissertation will feature agricultural development in Central Asia.

For instance, China has introduced advanced agricultural technologies, including drip irrigation systems and newly developed cotton seeds, at a cotton plantation established in Tajikistan by a company based in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

China's achievements in agricultural development are increasingly being shared with Central Asian countries, helping boost local agriculture and strengthen regional cooperation, she added.



Tajik President Emomali Rahmon (center) addresses the audience during a visit to Peking University in Beijing on Tuesday.
WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Paraguay urged to recognize one-China principle

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing has blasted Paraguayan President Santiago Pena's recently concluded visit to China's Taiwan region, warning that "rejecting the one-China principle will only isolate oneself from the international community".

Pena visited the island from Thursday to Sunday, met with Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te on Friday in Taipei, and signed several so-called cooperation documents.

The Paraguayan leader claimed that the South American country supported Taiwan's "participation in international multilateral systems", that "the international community should recognize Taiwan", and that Taiwan does not need to worry about changes in bilateral ties.

In response, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Tuesday that "China firmly opposes and condemns such moves made by the Paraguayan side" and that "the wheels of history wait for no one".

"There is but one China in the world. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the one-China principle is a basic norm governing international relations and a prevailing consensus in the international community," Guo said.

"Over the years, we have heard time and again the strong call of people from various sectors in Paraguay to develop relations with China," he added.

Guo cited a poll in Paraguay showing that nearly 90 percent of respondents supported establishing diplomatic ties with China.

"This fully demonstrates that establishing diplomatic relations with China serves the fundamental and long-term interests of the Paraguayan people, and that colluding with the Taiwan authorities wins no support," he said.

The spokesman said relevant Paraguayan political figures had not only turned a blind eye to this, but had also blatantly visited Taiwan to endorse Lai Ching-te and his followers in defiance of global criticism, willingly serving as chess pieces for "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

"It is apparent to all whether this is truly for the benefit of the Paraguayan people or driven by ulterior motives," Guo said.

At a daily briefing last week in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian urged Paraguay's authorities to stand on the right side of history at an early date and sever the so-called "diplomatic ties" with the Taiwan authorities.

On Tuesday, Guo said, "We urge the Paraguayan government to change course at an early date, see where the arc of history bends, follow the will of its people, and make the right political decision to recognize the one-China principle."

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

Influencers dispel DPP disinformation

Taiwan netizens shown actual conditions on Chinese mainland

By **LI SHANGYI**
lishangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

A growing number of Taiwan social media influencers are crossing the Strait to document the Chinese mainland's rapid development, sparking a "reality-check" trend that has caught the Democratic Progressive Party off guard despite its tightened restrictions on exchanges.

In February, Fan Chi-fei, a former correspondent for several Taiwan media outlets, shared her experience of traveling to Chengdu, Sichuan province, on her YouTube channel, describing the trip as "very interesting" and praising the local cuisine and giant pandas.

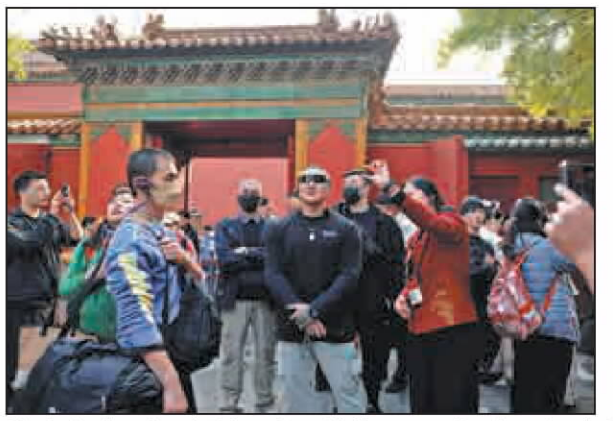
Speaking about the motivation behind the trip, Fan said in the video that "after reporting on the mainland for so long, it would make little sense not to visit and see it for myself".

Her trip has caught attention on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, as she was previously labeled as a "pro-green" figure who supported the DPP's political stance and made negative reports about the mainland.

Fan joins a number of Taiwan social media influencers who have visited the mainland for the first time in recent years. Other prominent online influencers, including Chen Chih-han, known as "Guan Zhang", and Chung Ming-hsuan, both of whom have more than 1.3 million YouTube followers, and have also made their first trips to the mainland over the past two years.

Through livestreams and vlogs, these content creators have presented the mainland's actual conditions, leading some viewers to reassess narratives on the island and realize that the reality differs from the image portrayed by the DPP authorities.







Clockwise from top: A Taiwan-based influencer writes characters in the style of oracle bone scripts — the earliest mature writing system in China — at the National Museum of Chinese Writing in Anyang, Henan province, in August. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Taiwan-based influencers visit Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan, in August. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Chen Chih-han (center), a Taiwan-based influencer known as "Guan Zhang", visits the Palace Museum in Beijing in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Out of the 'cocoon'

Chen, born in 1979 and formerly a supporter of the DPP, first visited the mainland in June last year to see it for himself. He livestreamed his six-day trip to Shanghai and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

Before departure on the first day, he admitted that he had felt uneasy, saying that many people on the island had tried to discourage and intimidate him.

Upon arrival, Chen said: "I had been influenced by the narratives on the island my whole life, believing whatever others told me. It wasn't until I came here in person today that I realized I had been completely misled."

Some narratives promoted on the island by certain media outlets have attempted to portray the mainland as "backward", including claims such as the "high-speed rail seats have no backrests" and the "toilets have no doors".

Chen challenged these claims through firsthand experiences shared during his livestreams, describing them as "lies spread by the DPP". During his trip, he used high-speed rail and mobile payment services in multiple cities while showcasing authentic street scenes and the daily lives of ordinary people.

To his surprise, he was warmly welcomed by people on the mainland, with some even politely asking to take photos with him.

"The trip completely overturned my negative impression of the mainland," Chen said, adding that he was astonished by the mainland's rapid development. Online, some who watched the livestream commented that they had misunderstood the mainland as well, and Chen's trip gave them a chance to know the realities.

Four months later, Chen made his second visit to the mainland, covering stops including Beijing, Shenyang in Liaoning province and Xiamen in Fujian province. This time, he offered a more direct acknowledgment of the mainland's progress, along with outspoken criticism of disinformation spread by the DPP.

"I originally thought I would never come to the mainland in my lifetime," the 47-year-old said, while encouraging young people in Taiwan to come and see the mainland for themselves.

Since taking office in 2016, the DPP authorities have steadily tightened restrictions on cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges. In 2024, the Lai Ching-te authorities raised the travel alert for the mainland to an "orange" level, advising people to avoid nonessential travel while highlighting what they described as the risks of visiting the mainland.

Fan, who visited the mainland for the first time in December last year, said many people tried to discourage her from making the trip. "They were worried that I might be detained and unable to return," she said.

The stark contrast between the DPP's portrayal of the mainland and what these influencers experienced firsthand led to a noticeable shift in their attitudes toward the mainland.

The DPP authorities have scaremongered and intimidated influencers who have visited the mainland, saying such trips are part of a "united front trap" or "cognitive warfare", while intensifying scrutiny of the funding sources and backgrounds of related groups.

Those who shared positive impressions after traveling to the mainland have faced personal attacks from DPP supporters and have been accused of engaging in "cognitive warfare".

Public reactions to these trips have therefore been polarized, with some expressing support while others criticizing them as being "brainwashed" by the mainland.

"I will continue to visit the mainland and bring the actual conditions back to Taiwan in an effort to help more people gain a more direct understanding," Chen said after his second visit.

Affinity and curiosity

"If you haven't visited a place, then you have no right to criticize it," said Chung, the 26-year-old travel YouTuber. Since first visiting the mainland in 2024, he has traveled to destinations including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

During his latest trip to Xinjiang in February, Chung drove alone for more than 1,600 kilometers across the region, visiting Sayram Lake and sharing a meal with a local family. In the video, he described Xinjiang's scenery as very beautiful and said the people there were "warm and kind". The video has attracted more than 1.4 million views on YouTube.

Chung also praised the mainland's convenience and well-developed infrastructure in his travel videos, a contrast that drew attention given his previously perceived pro-DPP stance. A video interview he conducted with Tsai Ing-wen, the former Taiwan leader from the DPP, remains featured on the front page of his channel.

Another Taiwan YouTuber, known online as "Boboyu", used his trip to Hangzhou to explain why more people in Taiwan are becoming interested in traveling to the mainland, citing affordable taxis and accommodation, as well as the convenience of a shared language across the two sides.

He said that while the shared language makes the trip much easier, the use of simplified characters, different payment methods and distinct accents still provide the sense of novelty that Taiwan travelers look for.

Notably, compared with travel videos filmed in other destinations, content about the mainland tends to attract far greater attention. Chen's livestreams during his mainland tour set multiple YouTube records in the Taiwan region, including the platform's highest livestream viewership, with total views reaching as high as 20 million.

Cai Zhuofeng, general manager of the Haixi multichannel network base in Xiamen and a veteran livestreaming industry practitioner, said people in Taiwan are eager to learn what the mainland is really like, while audiences on the mainland are interested in seeing how Taiwan visitors experience life there. "This has made content created by Taiwan visitors receive significantly more attention," Cai said.

More mainland-related content has been emerging across Taiwan's social media landscape, following a growing trend of influencers such as Chung and Chen visiting the mainland. Fan has expressed the hope of traveling to Yunnan province in the future.

As accessible online content has offered a more direct view of life on the mainland, the DPP authorities have not only tightened restrictions on cross-Strait personnel exchanges, but also moved to curb the social media app RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, which features genuine content related to the mainland.

In December last year, Taiwan's "interior affairs department" announced a one-year ban on the app. The mainland-based lifestyle-sharing platform has more than 3 million users in Taiwan, around 70 percent of whom were born after 1990.

Jhuang Yi-chang, founder of an online gaming startup in Taiwan, who took part in a digital media training camp held in Wuhan, Hubei province, in March, said: "Because so many positive stories and experiences continue to circulate on Xiaohongshu, people in Taiwan who come across them begin to realize that the mainland may not be as it is portrayed by the DPP authorities. As a result, more of them become interested in visiting the mainland to see it for themselves."

Gradually, Jhuang said, people in Taiwan, regardless of their political stance, are becoming more inclined to see the mainland's realities for themselves.

Despite restrictions and warnings issued by the DPP authorities, 306,900 Taiwan residents made their first trips to the mainland last year, up 34.6 percent year-on-year.

According to the National Immigration Administration, in the first quarter, applications for mainland travel permits by Taiwan residents increased 11.8 percent year-on-year, while the number of Taiwan residents entering the mainland rose 27.6 percent.

The mainland has introduced measures aimed at facilitating cross-Strait exchanges. From July 1, 2025, to Dec 31, 2027, Taiwan residents applying for mainland travel permits for the first time will be exempt from application fees. Since 2024, first-time permit holders from Taiwan have also been eligible for free or discounted admission to scenic areas and tourist attractions on the mainland within one year of entry.

Among the 10 policy measures introduced by the mainland in April are steps to promote the full resumption of cross-Strait passenger flights to further facilitate personnel exchanges. The mainland has also called on Taiwan to restore direct cross-Strait passenger flights.

At a news conference in March, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, welcomed Taiwan compatriots, including influencers and media practitioners, to come to the mainland, saying that the mainland will continue to create favorable conditions for their travel and exchanges.

Shi Xuefan contributed to this story.

Wenzhou welcomes island's aspiring entrepreneurs

By **LI SHANGYI**

The entrepreneurial spirit found in the city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province has left a profound impression on Pan Po-chuan, a 35-year-old from Taiwan who has dedicated his career to helping Taiwan startups scale and thrive within the Chinese mainland ecosystem.

Born in Taipei, Pan has served as director of the Wenzhou-Taiwan Integrated Development Youth Entrepreneurship Base in Wenzhou since 2021. While studying on the mainland in 2015, he was struck by the city's rapid development and its strong support for young entrepreneurs from Taiwan.

"Entrepreneurs from Wenzhou and Taiwan are both highly driven and entrepreneurial," Pan said. "Why not join forces to become even stronger together?"

Covering more than 1,000 square meters, the entrepreneurship base is home to around 50 companies founded by young Taiwan entrepreneurs. It is equipped with startup workstations, livestreaming studios and e-commerce training facilities.

As part of Wenzhou's support policies for Taiwan entrepreneurs, the base provides two months of free hotel-style accommodation, helps newcomers secure affordable long-term housing in youth apartments, and offers free business registration and office space without utility or property management fees.

To help young entrepreneurs from Taiwan launch their businesses smoothly, the base also assists them in finding free or low-cost retail spaces to connect directly with consumers, Pan said.

"You have to take the first step to understand the mainland market, which has introduced many preferential policies for Taiwan compatriots," Pan said, encouraging more young people from Taiwan to pursue opportunities on the mainland.

Beyond entrepreneurship services, Pan has also established an influencer incubation center focused on livestreaming and digital content creation. The center has signed 40 influencers, including nine young people from Taiwan.

According to 10 policy measures introduced by the mainland in April to promote cross-Strait exchanges, Taiwan industry professionals can participate in the production of mainland micro-dramas and web dramas through various channels.

In recent months, Pan has invited directors and actors from Taiwan to Wenzhou to build a cross-Strait performing arts talent platform. He said the initiative aims to combine the resources of Zhejiang's web series industry and artificial intelligence technologies with creative talent from both sides of the Strait.

Speaking about his broader mission, Pan said many aspects of life on the mainland are not fully understood in Taiwan because of restrictions on information flows and media communication. As a result, Taiwan youth who have established themselves on the mainland play an important role in fostering mutual understanding across the Strait, he added.

"We need to translate our message into expressions that people in Taiwan can understand and relate to," he said. "That way, they can experience the mainland's friendliness firsthand and develop a genuine understanding through personal experience."



Pan Po-chuan participates in a seminar on information technology in Beijing via video feed in June 2022. YI HAIFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Looking ahead, Pan expressed one particular hope: "I hope direct flights between Wenzhou and Taiwan can resume as soon as possible. Wenzhou was once the mainland city with the shortest flight distance to Taiwan, and restoring direct flights would greatly facilitate cross-Strait exchanges."

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Social Media Digest

Viral vendetta

During this year's Labor Day holiday, while crowds flocked to major tourist attractions, a very different kind of sensation was taking shape online. The micro-short drama series *Enemy* went viral on May 4, garnering over 760 million views on Douyin.

At first glance, *Enemy* seems like a survival-game thriller, with two protagonists cast as fated enemies. Yet beneath that surface lies a tragic love story from another lifetime.

In their past lives, the two characters were childhood companions and lovers. Set against the backdrop of the Nanjing Massacre, the historical storyline follows these two traditional Chinese opera performers as they are forced by Japanese invaders to perform in a propaganda play. Feigning obedience, they secretly resist, ultimately choosing to poison themselves and their captors, dying together onstage.

Remarkably, the viral hit was created by just two young content creators, Zhang Wenchu and Yang Xiyun. With a limited budget, they handled nearly every aspect of production themselves — even handmaking costumes to recreate Republican-era China.

The popularity of *Enemy* reflects young audiences' growing appetite for sincere storytelling. In an era increasingly saturated with AI-generated content, viewers are still drawn to stories shaped by emotional depth and genuine creative devotion.



Chinese cultural elements, like traditional opera, continue to captivate young audiences. VCG

Weirdly useful

When travelers visit China, the list of must-buy souvenirs is no longer limited to museum collectibles, silk scarves, or embroidered fans. In recent years, a wave of quirky, humorous everyday Chinese products has found unexpected popularity overseas, turning ordinary household items into practical yet playful lifestyle goods.

Lotus-shaped birthday candles, once a familiar sight at children's birthday parties in China in the 2000s, are now appearing at parties abroad. Glow-in-the-dark toilet mats and colorful showerheads have also gone viral online, praised for transforming ordinary bathrooms into cozy and whimsical spaces.

Another unlikely hit is the "dried-rat doll", a deliberately rough-looking plush toy with a skinny, scrappy shape. Often customized to resemble celebrities, these quirky dolls have become a form of social currency for young overseas fans, who bring them to concerts and even Formula One events.

Beyond novelty and humor, more practical Chinese-made products are also gaining ground. According to FastMoss data, a mini clip-on fan sold more than 11,600 units on TikTok Shop US in the past month, generating over $182,000 in sales.

Behind this steady stream of viral products is the speed, flexibility, and responsiveness of China's manufacturing ecosystem. Yiwu International Trade Market, home to tens of thousands of booths, offers a vivid example of how quickly Chinese suppliers can capture niche consumer demand and turn it into mass-market goods.

As Huang Liuying, an associate professor at the School of Management, Zhejiang University, wrote in Zhejiang Daily, "Behind these seemingly small trinkets is Yiwu's supply chain, which precisely captures emotional demand and demonstrates a deep integration of emotional value with the real economy."

GUO JIATONG



Quirky Chinese products are winning fans around the world. VCG



Young builders deepen Belt and Road ties

Through daily interactions and shared experiences, Chinese youth overseas are turning development projects into bridges of friendship and trust.

Yang Meihang visits the Edge of the World near Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on June 7, 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN
guiqian@i21st.cn

At a humble street food stall in Luanda, Angola, Yang Xin sat sipping local drinks with her driver, an Angolan colleague. Despite his modest income, he treated her to a meal and asked sincerely about her well-being.

This simple gesture of kindness became a quiet testament to friendship during Yang's time as an expatriate. It also reflects the broader spirit of many young Chinese working abroad under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), building bridges of connection overseas.

Yang, a young woman from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is a veteran contributor to the initiative. Since arriving in Angola in 2014, she has been involved in clean energy planning, water resources management, infrastructure development, and housing construction. Although her main role is as a translator, her responsibilities extend far beyond language interpretation.

"I handle almost all cross-cultural communication and inter-agency coordination. I've traveled to nearly every province in Angola," she said, highlighting the wide range of skills required for work overseas.

Over the years, Yang has witnessed the evolution of Chinese enterprises in the country. After Angola's infrastructure was devastated by civil war, Chinese firms were among the first to step in to help rebuild. Private companies specialized in civil engineering and housing, while larger, state-owned enterprises handled major projects in water, power, and renewable energy.

More recently, the presence of Chinese businesses in Angola has diversified. Beyond large corporations, individual Chinese-run retail stores have spread across Luanda, and new ventures like milk tea shops and food delivery services have emerged. The local Chinese culinary scene, once dominated by Sichuan restaurants, now features a variety of regional cuisines, including Cantonese dim sum, Fujian snacks, southern-style rice noodles, and northern dumplings.

"As a native of Guangzhou, enjoying authentic home cooking abroad gives me a deep sense of belonging," Yang said.

Unlike Yang Xin, who chose to settle in one place, Yang Meihang, a young man from Shangrao, Jiangxi province, moves across different countries and cultures, gaining a rich understanding of global diversity and thriving in a rapidly changing world.

Yang Meihang has a background in electronic information engineering and translation. In 2024, he was stationed in the Philippines working in energy business development. He later traveled to Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, leading market expansion efforts across the Middle East.



People watching a televised soccer match at a restaurant in Angola.
YANG XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



"The BRI is more than construction projects and contracts — the genuine connections between people we build along the way are just as important."

Yang Xin, a former translator and expatriate in Angola



"In their eyes, Chinese people 'only do business and do not fight'. There are no ideological conflicts. Our interactions are always peaceful and sincere."

Yang Meihang, a market expansion specialist in the Middle East

He observes that market conditions differ widely by region. "The Philippine market is relatively mature while the Middle East offers tremendous potential for infrastructure investment and attracts significant foreign capital, which brings both opportunities and challenges," he said.

Amid the grand narrative of the BRI, Yang Meihang finds that the warmth of everyday interactions leaves the deepest impression. He experiences this warmth not only in personal encounters but also through the local people's appreciation of Chinese culture and products.

"Local shops in Middle Eastern countries are full of products made in China, and many people are eager to learn Chinese. In Saudi Arabia, parents often encourage their children to greet Chinese visitors in Chinese — I've experienced this several times," he recalled.

"In their eyes, Chinese people 'only do business and do not fight'. There are no ideological conflicts. Our interactions are always peaceful and sincere," he added.

The same goes for Yang Xin. "The BRI is more than construction projects and contracts — the genuine connections between people we build along the way are just as important," she said.

She remembers a school principal in Angola, passionate about Chinese history, who once gifted her a book he had written on Chinese cultural studies. On another occasion, when no company drivers were available for an urgent trip, a local client offered her a ride on his motorcycle.

"Being stationed abroad isn't a one-way export; it's about mutual understanding. We brought steel and concrete, and in return, we gained friendship," she said.

Growing abroad

Overseas experiences have not only made these two young people active participants in the BRI but have also led to significant personal growth.

For Yang Meihang, the five-hour time difference between Saudi Arabia and China amplified his sense of isolation each evening. Spending long hours alone, he taught himself Arabic and established a running routine.

Living in a completely different environment also strengthened his sense of responsibility and helped him better understand himself. At first, the differences in appearance, culture, and cuisine made him feel like a stranger. Over time, as he connected with locals and fellow Chinese expatriates, he gradually found his footing and embraced his new life.

"As a member of the new generation of overseas builders, you must have the determination to navigate unfamiliar environments," he reflected. "An open mind and curiosity are essential for understanding local customs — only then can you truly thrive abroad."

Yang Xin brings a female perspective to her overseas experiences. She acknowledges that women often face additional societal pressures around marriage, childbirth, and personal safety, but she believes that working abroad can empower women, giving them courage and broadening their horizons.

"Overseas salaries are competitive, and many of my female colleagues have even bought their own apartments, achieving financial independence for the first time," she said. "This freedom allows us to make choices confidently and live life on our own terms."

Now back in China, Yang Xin has transitioned from full-time employment to freelancing. She occasionally takes on overseas translation projects, manages a social media account where she shares reflections on her time in Angola, and offers consulting to young people interested in overseas postings.

Through these efforts, she continues to apply the lessons and confidence she gained while working abroad.

On her social media account, she wrote: "Experiences like these show young people that the world is vast, challenges can become opportunities, and life offers far more possibilities than we often imagine."

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Hands-on hobbies calm young minds

How fidget toys, traditional gourds, and diorama stickers are reshaping stress relief among China's youth.



By **XIONG XINYI** and **GUI QIAN**

While reviewing documents with her right hand, 26-year-old Zhouzhou (pseudonym) from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, absently twists a small, colorful toy in her left hand.

"It's like spinning a pen in class when we were kids," she said. "The movement doesn't require much attention, but it helps you relax."

The object is a Tangle fidget toy, made of connected curved pieces that can be twisted into different shapes.

Zhouzhou discovered the toy in late summer 2025, before it became popular online. She bought several items to film an ASMR video and posted it on her social media account, Meishi Zhouzhou. The video quickly gained traction, with more than half of the viewers asking what the toy was.

As Zhouzhou observed, the Tangle appeals to people visually and through its sound. "Most versions make a crisp sound, like ice cubes dropping into an Americano," she said.

Touch adds another layer to the experience, with materials ranging from firm to soft. Some users rely on the toy to replace habits such as picking at their skin or nails. Others simply enjoy the ritual of it.

Zhouzhou enjoys collecting and neatly arranging the colorful pieces. "I find that neatness really satisfying," she said.

What began as a personal interest gradually became something she wanted to share with others. She now sells the toy through livestreams, too.

One student customer bought 22 pieces — not all at once, but one by one after each livestream demonstration.

"For many students, comfort doesn't come from expensive bags or gadgets," Zhouzhou said. "Unlike adults who save up for a big purchase, students see these stress-relief toys as little indulgences."

According to China Youth Daily, more than 1 million units had been sold in China by the 2026 Spring Festival after the toy was launched in March 2025.

Tradition brings comfort

While trendy stress-relief toys dominate e-commerce today, the desire for comfort through touch is far from new. Throughout many generations, people have turned to small objects to create moments of quiet reflection.

The history of Chinese bottle gourds can be traced back to ancient times, when they were cherished for their symbolic meanings of harmony and prosperity. Over the centuries, gourds evolved from ritual vessels to handheld companions.

Now, these old objects have sparked a new fervor among young people. Li Yajuan is one of them.

After work, Li picks several gourds from her collection, places them on a tray, and rubs them while watching TV. She carries one during her commute and takes one to doctor's appointments. She also kept one close during a recent hospital stay when she felt frightened and alone.

Working in e-commerce and design, she first bought gourds for a design project. The hobby soon replaced drawing and tearing paper as her preferred stress relief. Since autumn 2024, she has spent more than 100,000 yuan ($14,703) building her collection.



> "Compared with the fast pace and intensity of mobile games, we enjoy the slower process of building our own ideal little worlds."
>
> **Liang Jie,** a diorama sticker lover



> "Playing with gourds is about calming your mind and accepting the process, along with whatever changes happen naturally, whether they occur in a day or over the course of a year."
>
> **Li Yajuan,** a gourd collector

"Playing with gourds is about calming your mind and accepting the process, along with whatever changes happen naturally, whether they occur in a day or over the course of a year," she said. Some gourds can be polished quickly, while others require weeks of sun exposure.

When she feels angry, she rubs harder, and the gourds become shinier. To Li, those changes are positive feedback — turning something negative into something better.

But for collectors, the real excitement comes from the chase, with 500 people sometimes competing for just 10 items.

Once, Li lost her internet signal in an elevator while trying to buy a rare gourd and assumed she had missed out. Moments later, right after stepping out of the elevator, she found she'd successfully secured the limited piece.

"I just crouched in the hallway in disbelief," she recalled. Over time, the hobby taught her to accept that some things are out of one's own control. "If something is meant to be yours, it will come," she said.

Her hobby has since grown into a small business selling polishing cloths and pouches. In fact, the gourd industry has already become a sizable market. In Dongchangfu district of Liaocheng, Shandong province, gourd cultivation generates annual gross revenues of 2.6 billion yuan, accounting for 75 percent of the national market, according to Liaocheng city authorities.

Tiny worlds heal

Not all stress-relief hobbies rely on touch alone. For some young people, comfort comes from carefully constructing miniature worlds that offer a temporary escape from daily pressures.

Without needing scissors or glue, users can place diorama stickers of characters, buildings, furniture, flowers, and other motifs onto a pre-designed background board to create tiny bedrooms, grand castles, and city streets.

Liang Jie, from Zhejiang province, shares videos of herself putting together miniature scenes on her social media account, Lucia Sticker Channel.

Liang turned to diorama stickers during a transitional period after leaving her job at a large corporation. Before bed, she works on stickers while listening to podcasts, treating the process as a form of meditation — a way to reflect on the day and stop thinking about the future.

The crisp peeling sound and the gradual layering of scenes make each diorama immersive. "It's like a flat version of Lego — more affordable — and also like a puzzle, but more structured and three-dimensional," she said. "Diorama stickers are a way to erase bad moods."

Liang and many of her followers have basically stopped playing online games since discovering diorama stickers. "Compared with the fast pace and intensity of mobile games, we enjoy the slower process of building our own ideal little worlds," she explained.

By early May, the hashtag "diorama stickers" had attracted 730 million views on Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, and nearly 1.43 billion plays on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

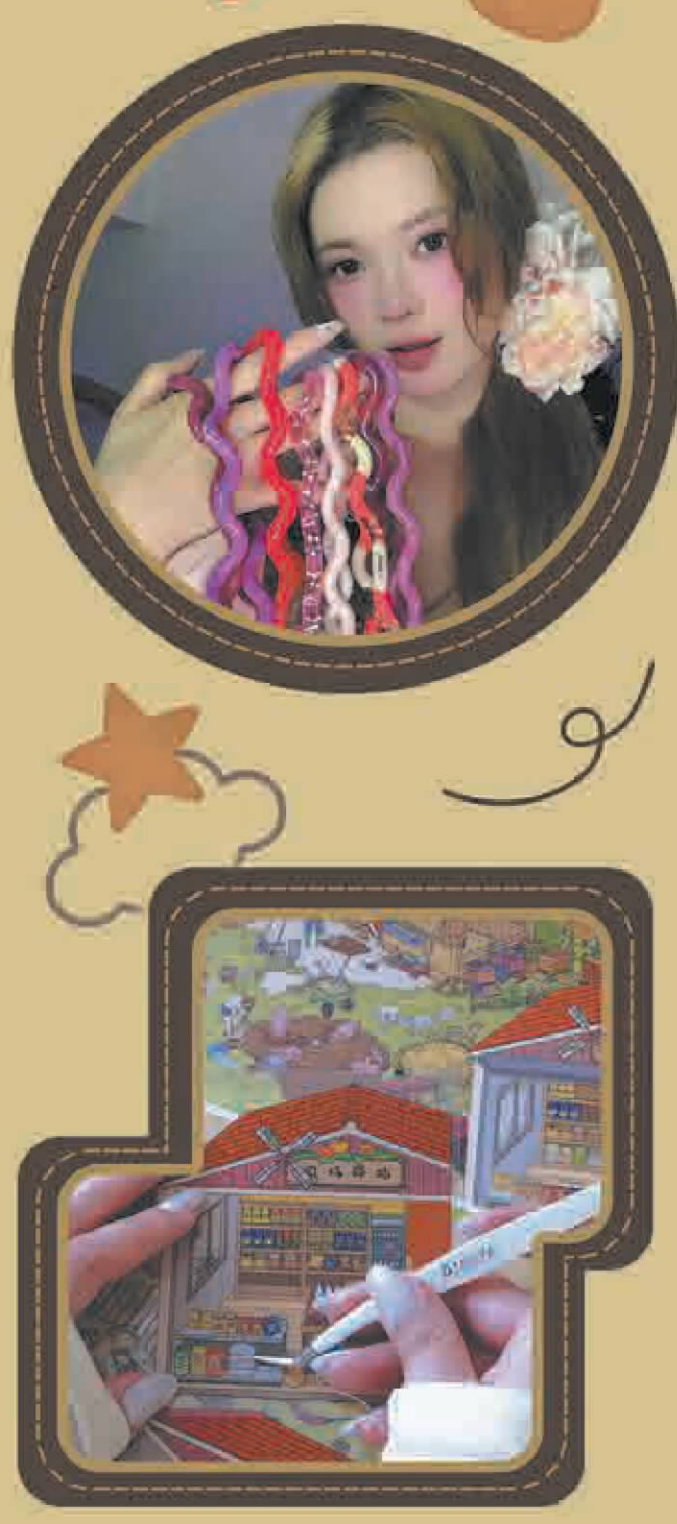
As the hobby grows in popularity, Liang has noticed sticker brands exploring a wide range of new styles and concepts.

Some brands are focusing on Chinese aesthetics, drawing inspiration from intangible cultural heritage and traditional opera. Others are creating soothing, story-driven scenes that capture the warmth of everyday life — such as a spring courtyard or a winter island — the kinds of spaces many young enthusiasts long for. Some are also experimenting with gaming-style experiences, allowing users to step into pixel-art worlds.

"Unlike the happiness that comes from simply buying something, diorama stickers offer the satisfaction of creating joy with your own hands," Liang said.

Whether twisting a plastic loop, polishing a gourd, or layering stickers onto miniature scenes, these activities share a common feature: repetitive hand movements that participants say help them find a controllable, calming rhythm amid uncertainty.

Contact the writers at xiongxinyi@i21st.cn



Top: Li Yajuan's gourd collection. **Middle:** Zhouzhou (pseudonym) creates an ASMR video with Tangle toys. **Bottom:** Liang Jie plays with diorama stickers as a pastime. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Cosplay unites generations

Amid wigs, costumes and fantasy characters, a mother's support for her daughter becomes a bridge between parents and children.

Jiang Fuchun, owner of a cosplay photo studio in Shanghai, brings anime and video game characters to life with her intricate creations. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
mengwenjie@i21st.cn

Four years ago, Jiang Fuchun rarely wore makeup. Today, in her Shanghai photo studio, she stands beside a vintage piano in a pink wig and Rococo-style dress, her eyes framed by glittering makeup and layers of lace cascading from her skirt.

The look is inspired by *Identity V*, a popular game by China's NetEase Games — one of many anime and video game characters Jiang has learned to recreate since stepping into the world of cosplay.

Jiang, 49, is the owner of Mofa Riji, or Magical Diary, a cosplay-themed photo studio. Over the past four years, the studio has attracted an online following of nearly 1.1 million.

Her transformation began with a simple request from her daughter.

"At the end of 2021, my daughter had just started middle school and was going through some emotional struggles," Jiang recalled.

The teenager showed little interest in many things but was drawn to fashion inspired by ACG (anime, comics, and games) culture. Then, one day, her daughter brought up an idea that would change the family's course: opening a photo studio devoted to cosplay.

"I just wanted to support her," Jiang said. "At that time, her happiness was the most important thing for our family."

After discussing it with her husband, Jiang decided to give it a try. With a background in IT and later experience in insurance sales, she admitted she knew little about cosplay at the time. But her daughter, then 14, helped choose locations, design interiors, source props, and plan nearly every photo shoot.

"She understood this world much better than I did," Jiang said. "I was just trying to keep up with her ideas."

What began as a family project gradually opened a new stage for Jiang herself. Mofa Riji has since expanded from a single space in Shanghai to a second location in Chengdu, Sichuan province. It has welcomed nearly 30,000 visitors, about 80 percent of them under 30, with middle school students forming the largest group.

Where generations meet

Over time, Jiang began to see the studio as more than a place for costumes and photographs. It had become a space where parents and children found new ways to connect.

One encounter stayed with her. A mother brought her 10-year-old daughter to the studio for a birthday photo shoot. The girl wanted to dress as a cute zombie character, but her mother strongly objected, saying it was unlucky to dress like a zombie on her birthday. Instead, she insisted on a bright red outfit, which she felt was more festive. The disagreement lasted throughout the session, and the shoot did not go smoothly.



"Seeing that change — from rejection to active support — moved me deeply. It showed me that parents can learn to understand, too."

Jiang Fuchun, owner of Mofa Riji, a cosplay-themed photo studio

To Jiang's surprise, the girl returned a year later. This time, her mother had already prepared her favorite outfits and wigs and accompanied her to another session.

"Seeing that change — from rejection to active support — moved me deeply. It showed me that parents can learn to understand, too," Jiang said.

Stories like this unfold frequently at Jiang's studio. She has come to see her role as more than running a business. She often takes time to speak with parents, helping them see cosplay from their children's point of view.

Some parents, for example, are initially unsettled by the pale makeup. Jiang explains that once the makeup, wig, and costume come together, the overall look becomes much more beautiful and natural.

"Cosplay allows young people to fully inhabit a character and gain joy and confidence through that process," she often tells parents.

But Jiang also draws on her own perspective as a mother. On one occasion, when a mother objected to her 11-year-old daughter wearing colored contact lenses, Jiang supported the decision, knowing that the girl was still too young to wear them safely.

"At the same time, I made sure the mother understood that the hobby itself wasn't wrong," Jiang said. "Even if families only spend a few hours here, I hope parents leave feeling a little closer to their children."

What has surprised Jiang most is how many parents are now willing to step into their children's world.

Some mothers even join cosplay sessions with their daughters, letting the children choose their characters for them.

"They may not know much about the culture, but they are willing to try," Jiang said.

Today, Jiang's daughter is an adult with other interests and only occasionally helps out at the studio. Jiang, however, continues to run the business — no longer as a mother nervously entering an unfamiliar world for her child, but as someone who has found her own sense of purpose and fulfillment in that creative space.

Online, fans affectionately call her "Auntie Jiang". Many young followers share similar stories with her: "My parents didn't understand my cosplay hobby at first, but after watching your videos, they finally got it."

"When I read comments like that, I feel the studio carries something many young people are looking for — the chance to be understood by their parents," Jiang said.

From Venezuela to China: *wushu* dreams realized

By YAN DONGJIE in Tianjin
yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

At the athletes' entrance area of the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in Tianjin, Hernando Dudamel, coach of the Venezuelan *wushu* team, gave last-minute instructions to his 14-year-old daughter, Valeria Dudamel, before she entered the competition area.

His eyes showed both the focus of a coach and the quiet pride of a father.

It was the second time Hernando had accompanied Valeria to the World Junior Wushu Championships as her coach, but the first time the father and daughter had visited China. For Valeria, competing in the birthplace of *wushu* was not only an important step in her athletic career, but also a chance to feel closer to the culture behind the sport she loves.

Held in Tianjin from March 25 to 30, the championships were a key qualification event for the 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, where *wushu* will make its debut as an official sport.

At the event, Valeria competed in *changquan*, *qiangshu*, and *daoshu* — *wushu* events featuring bare-hand routines, spear techniques, and broadsword routines — and secured her place at the Games, becoming one of only two *wushu* athletes from South America to qualify, according to the Venezuelan team.

"*Wushu* is an elegant sport full of culture and tradition," Hernando said. "It is deeply rooted in Chinese heritage and brings together people from around the world who share the same passion."

Hernando's own connection with Chinese martial arts began in the 1990s, when kung fu films became popular across Latin America. As a young man, he was drawn to the movements, spirit, and culture behind the films. He began practicing at a friend's gym and never stopped.

At that time, training conditions in Venezuela were limited.

"We lacked proper training equipment and had to use simple gear like fitness mats," he recalled.

Still, he kept going. Over the past 25 years, *wushu* has grown from a personal passion into a way of life.



Valeria Dudamel (left) practices with a US athlete at the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in Tianjin, held from March 25 to 30, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Valeria grew up in this environment. Influenced by her father, she started practicing *wushu* at the age of 8 and later joined Venezuela's national youth *wushu* team.

During training, Hernando treats her like every other athlete. He sets strict standards, corrects her movements carefully, and expects the same discipline from her as he would from the rest of the team.

"He is my coach during training and my father at home," Valeria said. "*Wushu* has given us a very special family bond."

In Hernando's view, *wushu* is not just about movements or medals. It is also about personal growth.

"Discipline and respect are the qualities I hope she can develop most," he said. "*Wushu* helps shape character, which is far more important than competition itself."

From mastering her first routine at 8 to winning three gold medals at the South American Wushu Championships and now qualifying for the Dakar Youth Olympic Games, Valeria has grown through years of training and competition.

"Watching her become independent, responsible, and determined is my most precious reward," Hernando said.

Their journey is also part of a wider story of inheritance in Latin America's *wushu* community. Many athletes who once competed alongside Hernando have now become coaches, referees, and mentors.

"Decades ago, we competed side by side. Now our athletes compete and learn from one another," Hernando said. "We bonded over Chinese *wushu*, and this connection is truly special."

Despite the language barrier after arriving in Tianjin, Hernando and Valeria said they quickly felt welcomed by the people around them.

"Although we don't speak Chinese, the warmth and kindness of the people we met — from volunteers at the venue to local residents — made us feel at home," Hernando said.

Their tight schedule did not allow them to visit more Chinese cities, but both father and daughter said they hoped to return and learn more about China's culture, history, and food.

"I have practiced *wushu* for 25 years, but this was my first visit to its birthplace," Hernando said. "More than the competition itself, what I will remember most is watching Valeria grow through this journey."

Zhong Aiyamei contributed to this story.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Detroit Pistons' Cade Cunningham (left) attempts to stop Cleveland Cavaliers' Donovan Mitchell during Game 4 of a second-round NBA playoffs series on Monday in Cleveland. The game saw Mitchell tie the NBA playoff mark of 39 points in the second half. AP

Mitchell ties playoff mark, as Cavs rally to level it up

Standout second half sees Cleveland star post 39 in Game 4 win over Pistons

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Cavaliers are back on an even footing in their second-round series after a huge second half from Donovan Mitchell in Game 4.

Mitchell tied an NBA playoff mark with 39 points in the final two quarters, as he rallied the Cavaliers to a 112-103 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday night.

"What a shift, right? Really struggled in the first half, and then a big-time second-half performance by Don," Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said.

"It's pretty impressive. I'm not sure I've seen in the playoffs a turnaround like that, where a guy is struggling and just absolutely turns the switch and is the complete opposite of the first half."

The home team has won all four games in the series, which shifts to Detroit for Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Mitchell matched the mark of Eric "Sleepy" Floyd on a free throw with 27.6 seconds remaining. He had a chance to break the record, set in 1987 when the Golden State Warriors faced the Los Angeles Lakers, but missed his second foul shot.

"Everybody let me know that I missed a free throw to break the record, though," said Mitchell, who finished with 43 points. "I will say that, but we're two and two headed to Detroit.

"That was what we came home to do, and that is all that matters."

James Harden had his 40th playoff double-double with 24 points and 11 assists. Evan Mobley had 17 points as Cleveland remained unbeaten at home in six playoff games.

"I airballed the first layup and was missing shots short," Mitchell said. "Sometimes it's natural, right? I wasn't really trying to get in there and force it, and, then, just doubling down on the defensive end, trying to take whoever I'm guarding, take them out of the equation. I'm not tripping, we were down four at the half.

"I always tell y'all it's not just about the scoring, it's about your overall impact on the game. And for me, it was just like, 'OK, now I have an opportunity to try to get downhill' and then started going in."

Caris LeVert had a season-high 24 points for Detroit. Cade Cunningham scored 19, the first time he has been held under 20 in 11 playoff games this season, and Tobias Harris added 16.

Pistons coach JB Bickerstaff, who takes pride in the physical style his team plays, was not pleased with the free throw disparity. Mitchell had more trips to the foul line (15) than the whole Detroit roster (12).

"There is no way one guy on their team should have more free throws than our team. We're not a settling for jump shots team," he said. "We didn't do enough to help ourselves, but ever since we came to Cleveland, the whistle has changed."

Even though Mitchell struggled in the first half and the Cavaliers shot 15 of 38, with most of their shots being 3-pointers, the Cavaliers felt pretty fortunate to only be down by four at halftime.

Atkinson's message at halftime was to play with more pace and attack downhill, which opened things up.

Mitchell scored 15 during Cleveland's 24-0 run that went from the last 12 seconds of the first half to the first six minutes of the third quarter. Cleveland trailed 56-52 at halftime before taking control.

The Cavs were 10 of 12 from the field and made three 3-pointers. They also converted five turnovers by the Pistons into nine points.

"When (Mitchell) sees a gap, he's going to go. We've got to eliminate his touches and catches on the run," Cunningham said.

"That run, we just never caught our footing again. That was the first time they really got loose in the series."

The 24-0 run was the longest in an NBA playoff game since Minnesota also scored 24 straight in Game 6 of its Western Conference semifinal series against Denver in 2024. It was also the longest spurt by Cleveland in a postseason game since play-by-play stats started being kept in 1997-98. The previous high was 19 in an Eastern semifinal series game against Boston.

"We understood that if we could just get some stops, get out in transition and get some easier looks, we'll be in good shape. We were doing a solid job, we just weren't scoring," Mitchell said.

"I think understanding that we were in a good spot, we did a good job of weathering a storm."

Mitchell and Harden accounted for 49 points apiece with their points scored and points off assists. Mobley was a force on both ends of the court, with eight rebounds, five assists, three steals and five blocked shots.

"Don's going to get all the flowers, but we should give a lot of flowers to Mobley for tonight's performance," Atkinson said.

"Donovan Mitchell was killing us, and that's pretty much it," Pistons center Paul Reed said.

It was Mitchell's eighth playoff game with at least 40 points, his fourth with the Cavaliers. He has at least 30 points in three straight games.

Cleveland is still looking for its first road playoff win this season, and will need at least one if it hopes to make the Eastern Conference finals for the first time since 2018.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Thunder holds off tenacious Lakers for another series sweep

LOS ANGELES — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points, Chet Holmgren made a tiebreaking dunk with 32.8 seconds to play, and the Oklahoma City Thunder swept the Los Angeles Lakers out of the second round of the NBA playoffs with a 115-110 victory in Game 4 on Monday night.

Ajay Mitchell scored 10 of his 28 points in the frantic final period, as the Thunder, in its toughest victory of the season, overcame the Lakers' tenacious effort and improved to 8-0 in the playoffs.

"We've done our job so far, that's all it really means," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "We've gone out there, we've executed, we've played at a high level and we've been able to win eight tough games against really good opponents. That's all it means. Nothing is guaranteed."

LeBron James, the top scorer in NBA history, had 24 points and 14 rebounds in the final game of his unprecedented 23rd season, but he missed a driving bank shot with 20 seconds left that would have put the Lakers ahead.

The 41-year-old James has repeatedly said he hasn't decided whether to play next season, so there was no ceremony or momentousness around this game. Instead, the Lakers desperately tried to extend their year, only to lose to Oklahoma City for the eighth time this season.

"I don't know what the future holds for me, obviously, as it stands right now, tonight," James said. "I've got a lot of time. I'll go back and recalibrate with my family and talk with them, and when the time comes, obviously you guys will know what I decide to do."

Austin Reaves scored 27 points before missing a tying 3-point attempt with eight seconds left for the Lakers, who advanced one round farther than almost anybody expected after losing NBA scoring champion Luka Doncic and Reaves to significant injuries a month ago.

Los Angeles still lost six of its final seven playoff games and fell well short of the conference finals for the third straight season.

"I didn't want our season to end," Lakers coach JJ Redick said. "I wanted to keep this thing going. I enjoyed every bit of this year."

Oklahoma City faced its first fourth-quarter deficits of the entire playoffs in Game 4, as the Lakers repeatedly refused to fold. The Thunder still got it done, and has earned at least the rest of the week off before it opens the conference finals against the winner of San Antonio's second-round series with Minnesota. The Spurs and the Timberwolves were all tied up heading into Game 5 on Tuesday.

"They won more of the minutes tonight than we did, and that hadn't been the case (earlier in the series)," Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault said. "They outplayed us for stretches. They're a really good team with prideful players. We did not expect them to give us an unearned win, and we went out and earned it."

Oklahoma City went 8-0 against the Lakers this season, winning all four regular-season matchups as well — but this one was the toughest. The Lakers took the lead and kept it close down the stretch with big buckets from Reaves and Rui Hachimura, who scored nine of his 25 points in the fourth quarter.

Holmgren's dunk with 2:03 left put the Thunder up 109-103, but Hachimura coolly converted a four-point play. Marcus Smart then drove the lane and hit a layup while being fouled in the final minute, converting a three-point play for a 110-109 Lakers lead.

But Holmgren got the ball inside and triple-pumped for a dunk with 32.8 seconds left, and James missed on his drive. After Gilgeous-Alexander hit two free throws, Reaves missed again, and the Thunder hung on to secure its sixth berth in the Western Conference finals in the last 16 seasons.

The Thunder won the first two games of the series at home by 18 points apiece, and they routed the Lakers 131-108 in Game 3.

Doncic missed the final 15 games of the Lakers' season after incurring a grade-two hamstring strain on April 2 in Oklahoma City, and he watched the season finale on the bench in a black sweatsuit. The Slovenian superstar apparently didn't get close to returning from the injury, which often requires two months of recovery.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James goes up for a dunk during Game 4 of a second-round NBA playoffs series on Monday in Los Angeles. AP

SOCCER

Leeds draw keeps Spurs mired in relegation fight

LONDON — Mathys Tel went from hero to villain as Tottenham drew 1-1 at home to Leeds on Monday — a result that leaves the north London club's Premier League future hanging in the balance.

The Frenchman broke the deadlock early in the second half to ease the tension at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, but then gave away a penalty with a reckless clearance attempt.

In the dying minutes, Spurs were grateful to Antonin Kinsky, who produced an astonishing save to deny the visitor a win.

Tottenham is now two points clear of 18th-placed West Ham with just two games left this season.

The Hammers lost 1-0 to Arsenal on Sunday — a result that guaranteed the safety of Leeds and Nottingham Forest, but left Spurs and West Ham scrapping it out for the final relegation spot.

Wolves and Burnley are already down.

Spurs boss Roberto De Zerbi, who only arrived in late March, pledged his players would "fight until the end".

"(When) we lost to Sunderland, it was impossible to see ourselves two points above the relegation zone with two games to go," he said.

"Now, we have to be positive and work. We have the quality to win other points and stay up. I think we deserve to stay up. We will fight until the end.

"When you are fighting relegation, you have to fight harder with the legs than with the head. We have to push until the end. Even if we had won today, it wouldn't have been finished yet."



Dominic Calvert-Lewin celebrates scoring Leeds United's equalizer in a 1-1 Premier League draw against Tottenham Hotspur in London on Monday. REUTERS

Dire home record

Tottenham came into Monday's match with just two home wins in the league under its belt all season.

Kinsky got down smartly to his right to keep out Joe Rodon's header in the 21st minute, and, at the other end, Joao Palhinha fired over from close range.

Tottenham broke the deadlock five minutes into the second half when Tel controlled the ball beautifully after it fell to him following a Pedro Porro corner.

The Frenchman picked his spot, curling the ball past a diving Karl Darlow.

But, with about 20 minutes of normal time to go, Tel attempted an overhead kick to clear the ball from his own penalty area, making contact with the head of the onrushing Leeds captain Ethan Ampadu.

Referee Jarred Gillett ruled that it was a penalty after a VAR check and Dominic Calvert-Lewin smashed the ball home.

Midfielder James Maddison was given a rousing welcome by the home crowd when he was introduced as a late substitute — his first match of the season after recovering from an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Then, the referee signaled 13 minutes of added time — a decision that lifted the home crowd further.

But Leeds came agonizingly close to a winner, with Kinsky producing a remarkable save onto the crossbar in the 98th minute from a point-blank range strike to deny Sean Longstaff.

In a frantic finale, Spurs had a last-gasp penalty claim turned down after Lukas Nmecha got the faintest of touches to the ball before Maddison went to ground.

The point lifts Spurs to 38 — two clear of West Ham, which has an inferior goal difference.

De Zerbi — the third manager of an injury-blighted and shambolic season for Spurs — was appointed with a brief to save the club from a first relegation since 1977.

His team is now unbeaten in four games, but the specter of the drop still hangs over the club, which won the Europa League just 12 months ago.

Spurs still have two potentially tough games to come against Chelsea and Everton, while West Ham faces Newcastle and Leeds.

AFP

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Winning brew

American turns passion for Chinese tea into profit

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Guideline helps protect growth of gig economy

POLICY REVIEW, PAGE 12



Star dilemma

Neymar's chances of spot in Brazilian team hang in balance

SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

WORLD WATCH
By Tom Watkins

Visit comes at pivotal juncture

United States President Donald Trump started his three-day state visit to China on Wednesday.

Here we are again, yet another pivotal moment as the world revolves around US-China relations.

Once again, we have arrived at a point where action or inaction will shape the direction of trade, technology, global security, the economy and geopolitical stability of the US, China and the rest of the world.

Peace and prosperity should be our goal.

The last thing either side and the world need now is greater instability. The world cannot afford a new Cold War, or worse, and wise choices must be made to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all of humanity.

We collectively need to seek "win-win" solutions rather than treat this vital relationship as a zero-sum game where one party's success requires the other's failure.

Perhaps at no other time in the modern US-China engagement has it been as imperative that we avoid unnecessary confrontation and conflict by keeping dialogue open and engaging in constructive, government and nongovernmental exchanges at the highest levels, as well as rebuilding and strengthening people-to-people, educational and cultural exchanges that have waned in recent years, particularly student exchanges, which are a foundation for long-term understanding between our two peoples.

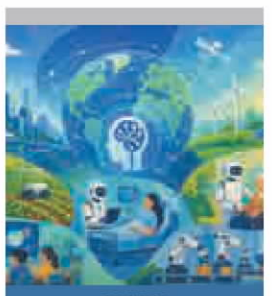
Dialogue between US and Chinese leaders must have a "trickle-down" effect that improves the overall relationship, reduces distrust and produces positive, tangible results for average citizens on both sides of the Pacific.

Change is inevitable. Progress should not be optional when it comes to US-China geopolitical relations.

Going forward, all major world issues will intersect at the corner of Beijing and Washington, DC. Are we going to swing for the win or strike out?

Both nations have work to do at home to better serve our respective peoples.

*See **Visit,** page 3*

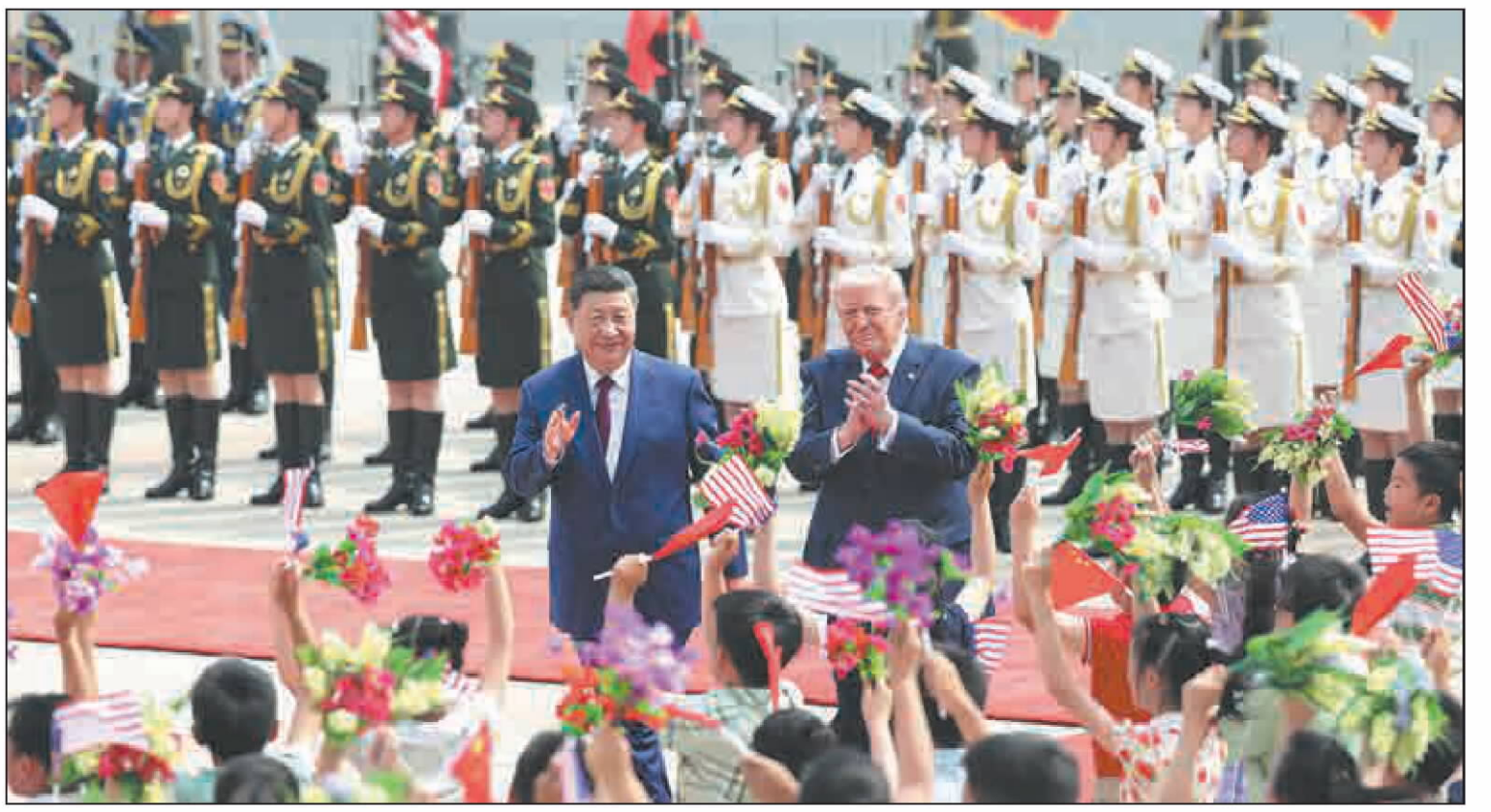


INSIDE
From AI visibility to developmental leadership
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President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for United States President Donald Trump, who is on a state visit to China. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi: China, US should be partners

Success in one is opportunity for the other, stable bilateral relationship good for world

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China and the United States should find the right way for major countries to get along well with each other in the new era, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with visiting US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Xi stressed that the two countries have more common interests than differences, success in one is an opportunity for the other, and a stable bilateral relationship is good for the world.

He expressed the hope that 2026 will be a "historic, landmark year" that opens up a new chapter in China-US relations.

"China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. We should be partners, not rivals. We should help each other succeed and prosper together," he said.

Noting that transformation not seen in a century is accelerating across the globe and the international situation is fluid and turbulent, Xi said that the world has come to another crossroad.

"Can China and the United States overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations? Can we meet global challenges together and provide greater stability for the world? Can we build a bright future together for our bilateral relations in the interests of the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity? These are the questions vital to history, to the world, and to the people. They are the questions of our times that the leaders of major countries need to answer together," Xi said.

Xi stressed that the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations. If it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, he said.

"Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water, he said, adding that safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is the biggest common denominator between China and the US.

On China-US economic and trade relations, Xi said that they are mutually beneficial and win-win in nature, and trade wars have no winner.

He said that where disagreements and frictions exist, consultation conducted on an equal footing is the only right choice.

Xi noted that the talks between economic and trade teams of the two countries, held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday, produced generally balanced and positive outcomes, adding this is good news for the people of the two countries and the world. The two sides should jointly sustain the good momentum that they have worked hard to create, he said.

In his speech, Trump hailed his "fantastic" relationship with Xi, saying Xi is "a great leader".

He said that the relationship between the US and China is going to be better than ever before.

Before the talks, Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump outside the Great Hall of the People.

Beijing rolls out red carpet for Trump

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing rolled out the red carpet to welcome US President Donald Trump for a much-anticipated summit with President Xi Jinping, as the world looks to the two largest economies for greater stability.

Inside

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Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, before they held talks.

Trump arrived in the Chinese capital on Wednesday evening, beginning his three-day state visit to China. Vice-President Han Zheng greeted him at the airport.

The trip marks the first state visit to China by a sitting president of the United States in nearly nine years and follows Xi and Trump's meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, last October, which helped to set the tone for efforts to stabilize and improve China-US relations.

The Xi-Trump summit is seen as another important moment in head-of-state diplomacy, which has played a strategic guiding role in China-US relations.

Over the years, Xi has repeatedly stressed that the China-US relationship is among the most important bilateral relationships in the world, and that the two countries must find the right way to get along.

His message has been consistent: While China-US cooperation can enable the two countries to achieve major undertakings serving their own interests and those of the world, confrontation would spell disaster for both countries and the wider world.

Analysts said the high-level engagement between Xi and Trump will be closely watched as to whether the two sides can keep the "giant ship" of China-US relations on a steady course, manage differences through dialogue, and expand practical cooperation, thereby injecting greater certainty into a turbulent world.

For a relationship as significant and complex as that between China and the US, direction matters as much as momentum.

During the meeting with Trump in Busan, Xi said, "You and I are at the helm of China-US relations. In the face of winds, waves and challenges, we should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations."

In their phone conversation last year, Xi said that recalibrating the direction of the giant ship of China-US relations requires the two sides to take the helm and set the right course, adding that it is particularly important to steer clear of various disturbances and disruptions.

Zhiqun Zhu, a professor of political science and international relations and director of the China Institute at US-based Bucknell University, said the "giant ship" metaphor highlights both the complexity of the relationship and the importance of guiding it in the right direction.

"It's a top-down approach, with leaders on both sides playing a pivotal role," Zhu said. "Only when the general direction is set can the relationship move forward."

Zhu said that maintaining the momentum of high-level engagement is crucial for the stability and predictability of China-US relations. Leaders on both sides, he said, should be commended for overcoming difficulties, lowering tensions and moving the relationship forward.

But setting the course also requires a clear understanding of the nature of the relationship.

At a welcome dinner in San Francisco in November 2023, Xi said that he had long been thinking about "how to steer the giant ship of China-US relations clear of hidden rocks and shoals, navigate it through storms and waves without getting disoriented, losing speed or even having a collision".

"In this respect, the number one question for us is: Are we adversaries, or partners? This is the fundamental and overarching issue. The logic is quite simple. If one sees the other side as a primary competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat, it will only lead to misinformed policymaking, misguided actions and unwanted results," Xi told participants from across American society.



People wave Chinese and United States flags to welcome US President Donald Trump, as he arrives in Beijing on Wednesday. Trump is on a three-day state visit to China. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Sun Chenghao, a fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said the "giant ship" metaphor speaks to the extraordinary weight of the relationship.

"China-US relations are too large and too consequential to be allowed to drift off course, or even capsize due to temporary storms," Sun said.

China and the US are the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and both play major roles in regional and global affairs.

Despite the twists and turns in bilateral ties, China-US economic relations remain deeply intertwined. Chinese customs data showed that bilateral trade in goods reached 4.01 trillion yuan ($590 billion) in 2025, accounting for 8.8 percent of China's total foreign trade.

"China's view that the relationship concerns not only the well-being of the two peoples but also the future of humanity is not merely diplomatic rhetoric," Sun said. "Rather, it is a judgment based on real interests and the stability of the international system."

That judgment has run through Xi's remarks on China-US relations over the years.

When meeting with Trump during his first term as US president in 2017 at the latter's Florida resort, Xi said there are a thousand reasons to make China-US relations a success, and not a single reason to break them.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Nations' friendship still bouncing along

From Ping-Pong Diplomacy to sports and youth exchanges, China and US continue building bridges

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn



Young people from China and the United States take a group photo during an event to commemorate the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy in Beijing on April 10. ZHAO WENYU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Members of the Whiffenpoofs a cappella choir from Yale University learn to play the *pipa* (a traditional lute) of the Dong ethnic group in Liping county, Guizhou province, on March 23. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA



Students from Muscatine High School in Iowa practice Chinese calligraphy at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Hebei province on March 18. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Deliah Autry, 30, is a member of the United States Women's National Flag Football Team, a three-time world champion, and a doctor of physical therapy specializing in pediatrics.

Last August, she made her first trip to China, attending the 12th World Games hosted by Chengdu in Sichuan province. The souvenirs that impressed her most included a Labubu doll and the games' medals, she said.

"The medal itself is so intricate and detailed, and has a little necklace. It is something that I would love to show my kids one day," she said.

The cultural events also impressed her. At the athletes' village, Chinese college students helped them try immersive cultural activities.

"We got to do arts and crafts, learn how to write our names in Mandarin. We got to try on traditional Chinese clothing, so it was just an awesome way for us to learn from them ... a great experience and a way for us all to connect," Autry said.

She made her second trip to China last month. In Beijing, she took part in the commemoration to mark the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy and the launch ceremony of the China-US Youth Sports Exchange Events, which received a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping.

Autry said she now has a better and deeper connection to and understanding of Chinese culture.

"I am impressed by the people, how genuine and kind-hearted everybody is, and I think it is something that I have personally attached to you (China) because you see the true humanity and love, especially for sports," she said.

In Beijing, she watched a high school flag football team from Tacoma, Washington state, playing against a Chinese student team.

Autry said flag football is a great avenue to continue making connections between the cultures, despite language barriers and differences in cultures and politics.

"There were a lot of handshakes, high-fives, and smiles, and I think that just brings the positivity forward ... It was just an awesome display of how sports bring everybody together," she added.

"There is a mutual understanding and respect for these athletes, and we all know that we are playing with the same passion and love for the game," she said.

Autry said sporting events and exchanges are a great way to show young people how cultural differences and language barriers are just small things and "what the true purpose is in life, which is to find a deeper connection with other humans across the world".

Last year, Autry met a lot of the players from the Chinese women's national team at flag football tournaments.

"I follow a lot of them on social media, and we are able to connect. And there have been times throughout the year where we have seen each other outside in other tournaments and it is just really awesome to build that connection," she said.

Reaching out

Justin O'Jack, chief representative of the University of Virginia's Pacific Asia Office, encourages young Americans to engage in more trips outside the US.

"These kinds of trips, where students can travel abroad and spend time in a country like China, really have a transformative impact on a young person's life," he said in an interview with China Daily, "... if their only impression of China is through the media that they consume, of course it's going to be different than experiencing it as a person here in China," he added.

O'Jack studied abroad when he was a college student, first in India and then in China.

"That experience as a student studying abroad in China definitely has influenced me in many ways, one of which is in the career that I chose — first running study abroad programs in Shanghai for American students and now representing an American university."

He said Chinese students represent the majority of international students applying to his university's undergraduate program for the current class graduating in 2030.

"Chinese students by far make up the majority of applications we received — I would say, (there are) over 10,000 applications from around the world. Over 40 percent of those were from students here in China," he said.

"The interest in studying abroad in the US continues to be very strong, especially among the undergraduate student population," he added.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a hiatus in the number of American students from his university studying in China, and now "we are seeing that start to grow and rebound", O'Jack said.

"We are not at the pre-pandemic levels yet, but we are still working and heading in the right direction," he said.

Sharing ideas

In 2023, President Xi proposed an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs over a five-year span.

O'Jack noted that the program has largely focused on high school and younger groups of students, and "that is important because the youth are our future".

Anders Ibsen, 40, who was sworn in as mayor of Tacoma in January, hosted a Chinese ping-pong delegation at Lincoln High School in the city, a school that Xi visited in 2015.

Ibsen said it is very important to "give young people an understanding about what it means to have greater partnerships, especially with our growing global economy".

"That's the basis of shared prosperity as well as peace ... in someone's life. If they can understand that it's a big world and that there are a lot of other different ideas out there, then we're all better off," he added.

Last month, Ibsen traveled to China with Tacoma high school students, his second visit to the country. "I first visited here in 2018. I visited Fuzhou (in Fujian province), which is one of Tacoma's four sister cities."

"To give you some reference, the city of Tacoma is a major port city on the west coast ... About half of our total trade comes from China. As a result, we very strongly value the partnership," he said.

Chinese trade will continue to be very important to the port of Tacoma, as well as the investments it has seen in the local economy, Ibsen said.

During the trip, Ibsen said the group was also able to learn more about innovative programs the government is working on. "There's always something to learn. We should always continue being students," he said.

When asked about what impressed him most in China, he said it was "the people".

"In the case of the city of Tacoma, my primary concern is keeping my residents safe and prosperous ... and by having these cultural exchanges, we can focus on the results, we can dispense with noise, we can dispense with politics," he said.

"We can just focus on what makes things better for people, what makes for a happier, more peaceful world. And that is the strength of cooperation. That's why we're here," he added.

Lasting impact

The first US table tennis delegation arrived in China in April 1971, for the icebreaking visit that helped boost the launch of bilateral diplomatic ties.

At that moment, Jan Berris had been in her position at the US consulate in Hong Kong for just two years "as a very junior consular official working on cultural affairs". However, she said she knew that "the event would have repercussions on the US and China as well as the rest of the world".

"But I had no idea that it would have such a huge impact on my own life," said Berris, who is now vice-president of the National Committee on US-China Relations, a nonprofit organization and advisory body founded in 1966 to encourage understanding and cooperation between the two nations.

When she returned to the US the month after the historic visit, two of her former professors at the University of Michigan asked if she would consider working at the committee based in New York.

The committee was then preparing to co-host with the US Table Tennis Association the visit of the Chinese ping-pong team to the US.

"My professors were on the board of the national committee and they felt that my diplomatic experience, brief as it was, would be helpful," Berris said.

She said she was not quite sure that she really wanted to live in a big city as "it was formidable".

"Actually, my undecided state was resolved by another major announcement that was made just a few months later, when President Richard Nixon went on national television and announced that Dr Henry Kissinger had made a secret visit to China," she explained.

One of the results of that visit was the Chinese ping-pong team's visit to the US in April of 1972.

"That helped me make my decision," Berris said. The next day, she asked the US State Department if she could work on the planning for the Chinese team's visit.

What began with a small ping-pong ball — slowly at first, and then in leaps and bounds — grew into a "broad and eventually very deep" network of relations between the two countries in every profession, and every field imaginable that brought all levels in the two societies together, she said.

"Now, a lot of people ask me how I can work in the same job for 55 years. But for me it has been easy, because I love my job," she said.

The first exchanges and the visits of the two ping-pong teams, with the hundreds and thousands of exchanges that followed, "serve to help people from both countries humanize the other" side, she said.



US youngsters experience traditional Chinese opera culture at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Beijing on July 14, as part of the Bond with Kuliang: 2025 China-US Youth Choir Festival. WANG ZIRU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



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SINO-US SUMMIT



Visitors taste wine from California at the food and agriculture pavilion of the United States on Nov 8 during the 8th China International Import Expo in Shanghai. The pavilion covered 350 square meters and featured 19 exhibitors, both record highs for the event. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CEOs upbeat on China market

Presence of business leaders shows nation remains highly important for US companies

By **WANG KEJU, JIANG XUEQING, MA SI** and **ZHONG NAN**

Business leaders from the United States have voiced their confidence in the Chinese market and pledged to expand investments in what they consider as one of the world's most significant engines of future growth, given the market's vast scale, ability to innovate rapidly and resilient supply chains.

A high-profile business delegation comprising top US executives from sectors including technology, finance, aviation and agriculture arrived in Beijing on Wednesday as part of US President Donald Trump's entourage. The delegation's presence signals that commercial ties binding the two economies remain too deep to sever, economists and business executives said.

Among the top business leaders and CEOs visiting with Trump are Jensen Huang of Nvidia, Tim Cook of Apple, Elon Musk of Tesla and SpaceX, Cristiano Amon of Qualcomm, Larry Fink of BlackRock and Kelly Ortberg of Boeing, according to a Truth Social post by Trump. Also on the list are executives from GE Aerospace, Goldman Sachs, Citi, Mastercard, Visa, Blackstone, Cargill and more.

Speaking to China Daily, Mastercard CEO Michael Miebach said: "China is one of the world's most dynamic economies, and Mastercard is committed to the market for the long term.

"Since we began processing domestic transactions in May 2024, we've made strong progress — expanding acceptance, deepening local partnerships and bringing simple, secure 'tap and go' experiences to everyday life."

Looking ahead, he added, "We will continue to invest in China and bring more products and services that support both businesses and consumers."

According to experts, the lineup of CEOs from some of the US' most influential companies sends a clear signal that despite years of tariff impositions, export controls and heated talks of decoupling, China remains a highly significant market for US businesses.

"The economic gravity between the two countries remains immense," said Chen Wenling, a senior researcher at the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies. "Even as trade tensions and geopolitical risks cast a shadow, the fundamental forces of China-US complementarity have not disappeared."

Chen noted that the US leads in financial markets and retains significant high-tech advantages, while China's edge in market scale, supply chain depth and rapid innovation is equally real.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said: "If you just say they're the two largest economies, you're missing the most important part. They're also the two most dynamic and most innovative economies."

"It is when you add the innovation and dynamism pieces that you truly recognize the need for the two countries to find ways to work together more effectively," Stein said.

Data released in November by the Chinese embassy in the US showed that more than 80,000 US companies have invested in China, while 7,000 Chinese firms operate in the US.

On Wednesday, a spokesperson for the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said that the council welcomes representatives from the US business community to visit China, adding that there is plenty of scope for, and tremendous potential in, practical cooperation between Beijing and Washington.

"We look forward to the business communities of both countries further deepening exchanges and cooperation, and making new contributions to the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations," said the spokesperson.

In addition to the companies in the delegation, US businesses across industries continue to demonstrate their confidence in the Chinese market through tangible action.

Henry Ding, president of 3M China, said: "In recent years, 3M has continued to expand its domestic manufacturing footprint, strengthen local R&D innovation capabilities, and accelerate the localization of its full value chain in China, spanning R&D, testing and manufacturing."

He added that today, more than 50 percent of the products 3M sells in China are manufactured locally.

Ding said that 3M China will continue to increase its local R&D investment this year and plans to achieve more than 30 percent growth in new product launches compared with 2025, significantly outpacing other global markets.

Ian Shih, president of Rockwell Automation China, said that China's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and continued high-level opening-up provide strong support for companies seeking long-term growth and diversified application opportunities.

At the 8th China International Import Expo held in Shanghai last November, US companies claimed the largest exhibition area, with their pavilions collectively covering more than 50,000 square meters, marking the seventh consecutive year that US companies have led all foreign participants.

Contact the writers at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Collaboration in energy sector expected to expand

By **ZHENG XIN**
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

Expanding energy ties between China and the United States will contribute to broader bilateral economic cooperation amid shifting global market dynamics, industry experts said.

Liu Jia, chief expert at the Economics & Technology Research Institute, a think tank of China National Petroleum Corp, or CNPC, said that the world's two largest economies share a complementary dynamic, with the US' energy export growth aligning with China's substantial market demand.

The push for closer cooperation comes as the US rapidly expands its liquefied natural gas infrastructure, with export capacity projected to reach 150 million metric tons per year by 2028, according to the research institute.

Liu said that this expansion creates a structural necessity for partnerships, as new US liquefaction projects require the security of long-term buyers to obtain necessary financing and make final investment decisions. "China offers the world's most predictable demand growth, providing the scale needed to anchor these US infrastructure investments," he said.

According to figures released by the institute, China imported 68.43 million tons of LNG in 2025 and is expected to maintain its position as the world's top LNG importer this year.

This synergy has already been evident in the market for years, with major Chinese State-owned enterprises such as China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, and CNPC signing long-term purchase agreements with leading US exporters, including Cheniere Energy and Venture Global LNG.

According to the institute, energy has always been an important component of the broader trade balance between the two nations, highlighting the sector's role in addressing trade disparities.

In addition to direct trade, the two countries have also established investment links.

US oil major ExxonMobil began operating its mega ethylene project in Huizhou, Guangdong province, last year. It is one of the largest foreign investment projects in China, and the first major petrochemical project constructed in China solely by a US company.

According to Liu, US and Chinese companies have jointly invested nearly $200 billion in third-party oil and gas projects across the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.

To maintain this momentum, Liu suggested that both sides should expand cooperation into emerging fields such as energy storage and power grid technology.

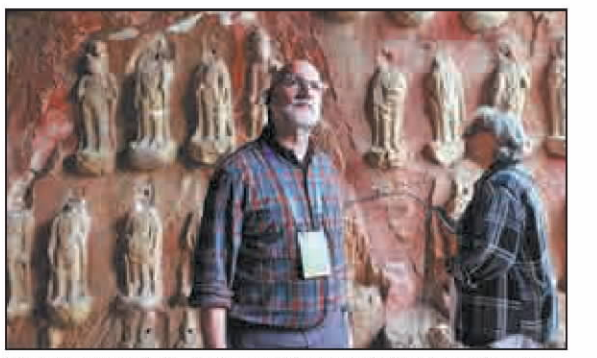
Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said that stable and predictable energy trade has provided an important area of mutual benefit.

As China's demand is predictable and the US supply is expanding, energy can serve as a bridge through which both sides can achieve tactical gains, Lin said.

Experts also recommended strengthening ties in traditional industrial sectors, including the supply of chemical feedstocks such as ethane and propane, as well as uranium mining.

"Establishing regular dialogue mechanisms between think tanks and industry bodies in both countries will be essential for stabilizing market expectations and deepening mutual consensus," said Liu from the Economics & Technology Research Institute. "This framework is necessary to ensure that energy cooperation remains a robust cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, even amid broader geopolitical shifts and profound changes in the global landscape," he added.

Heritage tour



Steve Carpenter (left), chairman of the Central China Executive Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, admires carvings at the Thousand Buddha Cliff in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, on March 25. More than 30 scholars and business representatives from China and the United States explored this largest grotto complex in Sichuan, which boasts over 7,000 Buddhist statues. The work started in the late Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) and flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). WANG LEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Visit: Both sides should be beacons for building bridges

From page 1

I have advocated, over decades, that the best way for the US to compete with China is to invest in our own people, infrastructure, technology and education, rather than trying to "knock China down". Pushing a strategy to hold China back will be as effective as starting to build a chain-link fence as a tsunami is coming ashore.

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

China-US economic and trade cooperation has brought benefits and challenges to both countries for over half a century.

We are at an inflection point. A miscalculation or mistake will have a devastating global impact.

While we need to continue to work toward building sensible economic, cultural and military ties, it is vital that China and the US continue to follow a seven Cs framework to help manage this delicate bilateral relationship, which is critical to the world:

- Communication (Open, high-level and subnational channels)
- Collaboration (On global issues like health and climate)
- Cooperation (To seek win-win solutions)
- Coordination (On regional and global issues)
- Competition (Managed and constructive)
- Contextual Understanding (Grasping the history and perspectives of both nations)
- Avoiding confrontation, conflict and casualties

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

As the 21st century unfolds, both the US and China should be the beacons for building bridges.

It is imperative that we find ways to develop a shared vision and common agenda in areas that are in our collective national interests while we have open dialogue on topics where we disagree.

Chinese and US activists, not just governments, should work to create and endow a robust international exchange, a people-to-people organization that connects students, artists, writers, athletes, tourists, educators, health and behavioral healthcare professionals, poets, sub-national government officials and NGOs between our two countries to listen, to understand and build bridges that will help sustain peace and prosperity for all.

These kinds of global connections lay the groundwork for meaningful dialogues, thoughtful synergy, mutual respect, joint prosperity and peaceful collaboration.

We need to get along and jointly prosper peacefully.

The author was deputy chief of staff to former Michigan governor James Blanchard, president and CEO of the economic council of Palm Beach County, Florida. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Summit: Cooperation is a realistic choice

From page 1

In March 2024, when meeting in Beijing with representatives from the US business, strategic and academic communities, Xi said that whether the two countries can find the right way to get along bears on the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity.

Sun said the most immediate benefit of a stable and predictable China-US relationship is that it reduces uncertainty for both sides.

"If tensions continue to rise, those affected first are often not abstract strategic interests, but ordinary businesses, farmers, consumers, international students and researchers," Sun said.

He added that trade barriers would push up costs, technology restrictions would narrow the space for innovation cooperation, and fewer people-to-people exchanges would weaken mutual understanding between the two societies.

Beyond the bilateral level, China-US cooperation is also closely watched in terms of its implications for global governance at a time when the world faces sluggish growth, geopolitical tensions and mounting challenges requiring international coordination.

In Busan last year, Xi told Trump: "The world today is confronted with many tough problems. China and the US can jointly shoulder our responsibility as major countries, and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of our two countries and the whole world."

According to Sun, many global challenges — from climate change and artificial intelligence to public health, financial stability and regional security — cannot be effectively addressed without sustained communication between the two countries.

Zhu, of Bucknell University, echoed that view, saying that if the two most powerful nations cannot get along well, the global economy will suffer and international cooperation on critical issues such as climate change and AI governance will become difficult.

The resilience of the relationship also depends on whether the two societies can maintain direct contact and mutual understanding.

David Chong, founder and president of the US-China Youth and Student Exchange Association, said that he has become increasingly aware that keeping the giant ship of China-US relations moving steadily requires joint efforts from both countries at all levels.

Since 2015, Chong's association has helped bring more than 2,000 young Americans to China for exchange programs. Through activities ranging from cultural and sports exchanges to experiencing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, young Americans have been able to see, hear and experience China firsthand in concrete and everyday settings.

"People-to-people organizations may not be in the 'cockpit' of the giant ship," Chong said, "but they can serve as 'connectors' and 'road builders' by strengthening the cultural and social foundation for the steady development of China-US relations".

Sun, the researcher, said that cooperation remains the most realistic and responsible choice.

"The reason is simple: Competition cannot erase interdependence, and differences cannot eliminate shared risks," Sun said. "China and the US cannot expect a voyage without winds and waves, but they must not allow the storms to decide the course."

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Summit to chart path for Sino-US ties

Head-of-state diplomacy essential for restoring trade stability: Experts

By **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York and **RENA LI** in Los Angeles

As the heads of state of the world's two largest economies start their meetings in Beijing this week, trade experts and economists said they expected the summit to chart the course for the future of bilateral ties and help restore stability to global trade.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump will meet in Beijing, as Trump arrived on Wednesday for a three-day state visit to China.

China said on Monday that it was ready to work with the United States to expand cooperation, manage differences and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world.

During a Port of Los Angeles media briefing on Monday, former US trade representative Katherine Tai described the meeting as "a really important moment for the US-China trade relationship".

Responding to a China Daily question on what is most needed to help reduce global uncertainty surrounding tariffs, supply chains and broader trade relations — including lower tariffs, clearer rules, or greater predictability — Tai, who served as the principal trade adviser and negotiator on US trade policy during the administration of former president Joe Biden, emphasized the importance of policy clarity and long-term planning.

"I think that what we need most — and I say 'we' in the real collective sense, because this relationship impacts everybody around the world — is some clarity around the principles that the United States wants to put out there and to enforce in the relationship with China," Tai said.

She said uncertainty in recent trade policies and market expectations has affected governments, businesses and global supply chains, adding that clearer communication and more consistent policy direction would help support long-term economic planning and cooperation.

Tai further noted that strategic pressure alone cannot sustain a functional trade relationship despite the fact that both nations have the capability to "choke" each other in strategic sectors.

"Once you have each other's attention, then you actually need to have an agenda and a plan in place for the short term, the medium term and the long term, for making this very important, complicated and challenged trade relationship work," Tai said.

Jerry Nickelsburg, director & senior economist at the UCLA Anderson Forecast, said the meeting between Chinese and US leaders could help provide a more stable environment even as longer-term shifts continue.

Despite recent adjustments in global trade flows, the interdependence of the two markets remains significant. China continues to serve as the third-largest export market for the United States, following Canada and Mexico, according to US trade figures.

"There seems to be an interest in preserving the stability of the current situation in US-China economic relations on both sides," Nickelsburg said.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said that Chinese factories and exporters continue to operate steadily despite ongoing trade tensions.

Mitigating uncertainty

During recent visits to Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Seroka noted that order volumes remained stable, even as China expanded its exports to other global trading partners to mitigate uncertainty.

Jim Sutter, CEO of the US Soybean Export Council, expressed hope that the meeting would reaffirm China's purchase of US agricultural goods, including soybeans, calling soybeans an "important indicator" of the strengthening ties between the two nations.

US industry leaders and local officials have echoed the call for cooperation.

Jeffery Jones, chairman of the Council for Trade and Investment Promotion in New Jersey, said that trade and business development should remain a priority.

"I'm a former mayor. On the political side of things, I don't have to go to the presidential level to say that from one town to another, municipal level, if we don't work together, nothing good happens," he added.

Daniel Mabey, Asia Region President for the United Natural Products Alliance, noted that because China is a major supply chain partner for numerous industries, it is essential that "dialogue continues and continues to move forward" to get the relationship back on a productive track.

"Most of the US-China relationship is based on trade and China is a big supply chain partner for a lot of industries, not just our industry," Mabey said.

"I used to live in Beijing for a long time ... I have had lots of industry dialogue. We need to get the tracks straightened again and work together."

Contact the writers at belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com.



A visitor interacts with a robot from the Chinese robotics company Fourier during the 2026 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the United States, on Jan 8. The 2026 CES, the world's premier technology event, attracted thousands of exhibitors from more than 155 countries and regions, according to the US Consumer Technology Association, the organizer of CES. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

Eye on the ball



Enthusiasts from the US visit a pickleball production company in Shangyou county in Jiangxi province, on Sunday. The county has launched a comprehensive three-year plan for 2024 to 2026 that includes 13 million yuan ($1.8 million) in subsidies to support the sport and a special fund for hosting tournaments. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Leaders' interactions offer 'irreplaceable strategic guidance' for US-China ties

By **ZHAO HUANXIN** in New York
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

Beijing's top envoy in Washington has said that interactions between the heads of state provide "irreplaceable strategic guidance" for China-US ties, expressing hope that this week's summit will be a "successful one" that will chart the "right course" for future relations.

At the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump is visiting China from Wednesday to Friday.

In an interview with Newsweek published on Tuesday, Ambassador Xie Feng said that with the joint efforts of both sides, the summit will hopefully see the two countries expand cooperation and properly manage differences, while exploring ways to get along in the "new era" based on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

"In an increasingly turbulent world, the strategic value of China-US relations becomes more prominent," Xie said. "A stable and constructive China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both our peoples, but also meets the shared expectation of the international community."

On the Taiwan question, Xie said that he believed the American people, who faced the danger of division and had a civil war in the past, can understand China's will and determination to safeguard national unity.

The Chinese side urges the US side to commit to the one-China principle, the three China-US joint communiques with concrete actions, make the right choice as early as possible, fundamentally remove the biggest obstacle to China-US relations, which is the Taiwan question — a burden that risks dragging the two countries into confrontation and conflict — and open up broader room for developing bilateral ties, Xie said.

Xie also said that history has proven once and again that a tariff war or trade war produces no winner, damages the interests of both sides, and hurts the whole world.

He noted that under the guidance of the two leaders, China and the United States have reached a series of common understandings through economic and trade consultations, and have stabilized bilateral economic and trade relations.

"This has not come easily and should be cherished. But it is still far from enough. We hope the US side will move further ahead and completely remove the unilateral tariffs and other restrictive measures," he said.

Xie said competition between the United States and China should be viewed as a "track-and-field race toward mutual excellence" rather than a "zero-sum boxing match".

"Let our two countries compete to offer more public goods to the world, to better help developing nations reduce and eliminate poverty, and to contribute more to the sustained and inclusive development of the global economy," the envoy said.

Turning to the fentanyl issue, Xie noted that the fentanyl crisis in the US was not created by China, but "out of the humanitarian spirit and for the sake of China-US friendship", China is providing assistance to combat the "common enemy of humanity".

He noted the current US administration has strengthened legislation, law enforcement and regulatory control to combat fentanyl, and the number of fentanyl-related deaths in the US has dropped by 37.5 percent, to which China also made important and positive contributions.

He urged Washington to appreciate and cherish China's goodwill, view bilateral cooperation outcomes in a just manner, stop shifting the blame for the fentanyl issue, avoid imposing alternative tariffs as substitutes for fentanyl-related tariffs, and remove China from the list of so-called "major drug source countries" as soon as possible.

On artificial intelligence, Xie said that the world does not want to see an "Iron Curtain" in AI, nor attempts at technological enclosure, let alone a Star Wars-style rivalry.

"China-US coordination on AI bears on the future of both our countries and the entire humanity. We hope the US side will work with us in the same direction, to enhance dialogue, manage competition and conduct cooperation, so that AI will become a new frontier for China-US cooperation and a new ladder for human progress," Xie said.

Chinese Americans welcome leaders' meeting

By **LIA ZHU** and **CHELSEA GE** in San Francisco

US President Donald Trump's state visit to Beijing from Wednesday to Friday, the first visit to China by a US president in nine years, has sparked enthusiasm among Chinese Americans, who view the meeting between the two heads of state as an important moment for dialogue, cooperation, and understanding between the two countries.

During the visit, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump are expected to have in-depth discussions on major issues, including China-US relations, world peace and international development.

"I'm excited at this opportunity for President Trump to go to China and visit President Xi," Phillip Chen, a California Assembly member, told China Daily. "I believe that this world right now is a very large village, and that the relationship between China and the United States will continue to blossom."

"I personally think that as it stands right now, we've been cooperating for many, many years. We have to make sure that we work closely together to make sure that our mutual interests are served sufficiently," he said, adding that he hoped the meeting would help open up opportunities for more exchanges and cooperation.

William Zhang, a San Francisco-based community leader and an ardent advocate for peaceful cross-Strait relations, called the meeting "a long-awaited conversation between the two heads of state".

"President Trump will hopefully learn firsthand how much importance the Chinese government places on the peaceful reunification of the nation," he said, adding that Washington should uphold the one-China principle. "It is a prerequisite for the stable and healthy development of China-US relations," Zhang said.

Lei Wang, a Chinese culture advocate in Southern California, sees the leaders' meeting as an opportunity to promote and expand understanding of Chinese culture at the federal level.

"This is a good thing. There's a popular song in China right now called *Better to Meet in Person* and I believe that a meeting between the two countries' leaders will help deepen mutual understanding," he told China Daily.

Wang, also a small-business owner, said he hoped the meeting would help promote business interaction, trade activities and business investment between the two countries.

California, located on the Pacific coast, is an important gateway for Chinese goods entering the US, said Wang. "If China-US relations aren't good and trade relations don't flow smoothly, it will seriously affect California's foreign trade, imports and exports, which in turn affects many people's employment and how businesses operate."

"We need the trade to continue to support the employment and the society here in the US," Wang said. "Therefore, I really hope that both sides can deepen understanding in trade and economic relations, reach consensus, and push the relationship toward a more positive and stable direction."

Despite differences and frictions that have marked bilateral relations, Hu Lirong, CEO of CW Bearing USA, expressed confidence in dialogue between the presidents.

"These are challenges that can ultimately be worked through under the leadership of the two countries' leaders," he told China Daily.

Hu said the company has focused on localized operations, creating jobs for the community, with young employees accounting for about 30 percent of its workforce. He added that the company places strong emphasis on technical expertise and cross-cultural communication.

Chang Jun in San Francisco and Li Mingmei in New York contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at liazhu@chinadailyusa.com.

Observers in Europe pin hopes on dialogue

By **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Brussels
zhangzhouxiang@chinadaily.com.cn

As US President Donald Trump began his visit to China on Wednesday — his second state visit to China following his previous trip in November 2017 and his first during his second presidential term — European political and business figures are closely watching the bilateral relationship.

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump comes at a time of heightened global uncertainty, marked by geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, supply chain disruptions and slowing growth across major economies. Some observers in Europe believe that stable China-US relations are increasingly seen not only as a bilateral necessity, but also as a prerequisite for global economic predictability and international stability.

Ondrej Dostal, a Czech member of the European Parliament, described Trump's visit as a recognition of China's global importance and of the limits of confrontation-based policies.

Dostal argued that unilateral pressure and economic coercion have undermined international trust and damaged global trade. The world needs stable trade, mutual respect, diplomacy, infrastructure, development, and coexistence between civilizations.

According to Dostal, the leaders' meeting may also encourage European governments to reassess their own approach toward China. "If even Washington now recognizes that it must negotiate with Beijing, then European governments should finally stop pretending that confrontation with China serves European interests," he said.

Former director-general for international affairs in the German state of Hessen Michael Borchmann said the meeting carries significance far beyond bilateral ties.

Quoting a US research institute's description of the meeting as "Managing the World's Most Important Relationship", Borchmann said the phrase "absolutely fits" the current geopolitical environment.

Enhancing communication

"At a time when the world is facing growing uncertainty and fragmentation, enhancing communication, managing differences and maintaining stable China-US relations also benefits the world," he said.

Borchmann said the meeting follows last year's temporary trade truce reached in Busan, South Korea, where both sides attempted to halt escalating tariff retaliation. He expressed hope that the meeting would deepen consensus on trade and issues including the Middle East and global development.

He also referenced Xi's long-standing emphasis on stable bilateral ties. "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-US relationship a success, but not a single reason to break it," Borchmann quoted Xi as saying.

From the European business community, Bernard Dewit, chairman of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, stressed the importance of constructive engagement between the world's two largest economies.

Speaking from a European perspective, Dewit described stable China-US relations as "very important" for global economic and geopolitical certainty.

He noted that many European countries are facing economic recovery challenges, inflationary pressures and security concerns, and said improved China-US ties could help reduce tensions, restore investor confidence and strengthen international cooperation.

Dewit also emphasized Europe's preference for dialogue over bloc confrontation. Europe, he said, does not want to see the world divided into opposing camps and instead supports multilateralism, predictability and strategic autonomy.

As the leaders' meeting unfolds in Beijing, many in Europe will be watching closely for signs that the two major powers can stabilize relations and provide a measure of certainty to an increasingly fragmented world.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Harley Seyedin

Strengthening bilateral ties for global stability

The relationship between the United States and China remains one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. As US President Donald Trump is visiting Beijing, both countries have an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, stabilize economic ties and promote prosperity for their peoples and the global economy.

Despite years of trade tensions and tariffs, the two economies are deeply interconnected. Research by the Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions emphasizes that the two nations benefit enormously from trade, investment, innovation, and educational exchange.

US consumers and businesses benefit from affordable goods and integrated supply chains, while Chinese consumers and businesses benefit from access to US technology, agricultural products, financial services, and higher education.

Millions of jobs in both countries are linked directly or indirectly to this economic relationship.

One major development in recent years has been the significant reduction in the US-China trade deficit.

According to data from the Office of the US Trade Representative and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, the US goods trade deficit with China fell to approximately $202.1 billion in 2025, down from $295.5 billion in 2024. This represents a 31.6 percent reduction in just one year.

The decline was due to changes in supply chains, increased domestic manufacturing in some sectors, diversification of trade partners, and evolving tariff policies. Yet even with these adjustments, bilateral trade remained enormous. Total China-US goods trade still exceeded $414 billion in 2025, demonstrating that the two economies continue to rely on each other in many areas.

Global Lens

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

Trump's visit provides an opportunity to move beyond confrontation and toward practical cooperation.

Both nations share common interests in global economic stability, energy security, climate resilience, public health, artificial intelligence governance and financial market stability.

Cooperation between Washington and Beijing is not simply beneficial for US and Chinese citizens; it is essential for global growth and international confidence.

There are many areas where positive collaboration can expand. In agriculture, China remains an important market for US farmers exporting soybeans, corn, beef and other products. Increased agricultural purchases can help support rural communities across the US while ensuring food security and stable supplies for Chinese consumers.

In technology, both countries can cooperate on standards for AI safety, cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing. Joint research partnerships between universities and companies have historically produced breakthroughs in medicine, engineering and clean energy.

Climate and energy cooperation also present major opportunities. The US and China are the world's two largest economies and energy consumers.

By working together on renewable energy, battery storage, carbon reduction technologies, and electric vehicles, both countries can accelerate innovation while creating jobs and investment opportunities. Cooperation in these sectors could help reduce global emissions while improving energy affordability and reliability.

Educational and cultural exchanges are equally important. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students have studied in US universities over the past two decades, contributing billions of dollars to local economies while building people-to-people ties.

Academic collaboration and tourism help reduce misunderstandings and strengthen mutual respect. Business leaders, students, scientists, and cultural organizations all benefit when relations are stable and constructive.

The global economy also benefits from open communication between the US and China. Financial markets react positively to signs of dialogue and predictability between the two powers.

Businesses on both sides want stable policies, clear regulations, and reduced uncertainty. A cooperative atmosphere encourages investment, strengthens supply chains, and supports economic growth worldwide.

While differences will remain on trade, security, and geopolitical issues, history shows that engagement produces better outcomes than isolation. Strong diplomacy and mutual respect can help manage disagreements while preserving areas of common interest. The US and China are competitors in some areas, but they are also partners in maintaining global prosperity and stability.

Trump's visit could become an important moment to reset the tone of the relationship.

Constructive discussions on trade, investment, market access and economic cooperation could create new momentum for both nations.

The US and Chinese peoples both seek economic opportunity, stable growth, innovation, and peace.

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

The author is the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, and the winner of the 2017 Oslo Business for Peace Award, which is awarded by a committee consisting of Nobel laureates in peace and economics. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Jack Midgley

When friends far away can share daily life in real time

Young Chinese creators on Xiaohongshu post a smart study nook or a city workout routine, and peers from the United States quickly take notice.

They borrow the idea, tweak it for their own lives, and share it right back.

This digital back-and-forth links millions of young people, quietly building the trust and practical know-how that enables real innovation.

Global Lens

These are the new "people-to-people" exchanges. They happen daily without long flights or months of planning.

Free, effortless and constant, these digital connections are shaping an inclusive future of innovation among people in China and the United States.

Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump have an important opportunity to amplify these connections when they meet in Beijing.

Together, they can help transform the grassroots energy into productive China-US ties that are already growing at the speed of digital connections.

Xiaohongshu's explosive growth brings this to life. The platform's lifestyle content routinely generates massive engagement domestically, while its cross-border search functionality has captured a multi-million-strong audience in the US.

US students respond to Chinese posts with duets and adaptations, often tagging back with comments like "Xiaohongshu changed my set-up!" as tips on lighting, storage, and focus zones flow freely.

President Xi captured the heart of this dynamic when he said that the hope of China-US relations lies in the people.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The numbers reinforce this statement. Xiaohongshu racked up around 3.7 million US downloads in early 2025 and is projected to hit double digit millions this year, while already serving over 300 million monthly users worldwide.

A vast majority of these users are young people.

TikTok connects with 170 million US users, many of them young people sharing news and ideas, while in 2026 duets between Chinese and US creators have attracted hundreds of millions of views.

These platforms keep the innovative exchanges flowing constantly and cheaply, shrugging off diplomatic ups and downs in the relationship.

Miranda Qu, Xiaohongshu's co-founder, laid the groundwork for this trend by turning community input into viral lifestyle solutions that now draw global audiences.

The platform stands out because young Chinese creators blend personal stories with actionable advice on focus-boosting study setups, apartment-friendly fitness routines, and smart daily hacks.

US youth have joined in, blending Chinese precision with their own creative twists to build sharper, more intentional habits on both sides of the Pacific.

These real people-to-people exchanges build habits of cross-cultural innovation.

TikTok's Khaby Lame adds speed to the mix with his silent takedowns of overcomplicated life hacks that resonate universally, while Xiaohongshu provides the depth that makes these exchanges truly transformative.

What makes these digital exchanges so potent is their role in providing the secret sauce of innovation: an intuitive feel for what clicks with users.

When a Chinese creator's dorm organization trick reshapes a US student's space, or Khaby's simplicity sharpens a video edit, they are co-creating that shared sense in real time.

A joint summit statement pledging support for digital youth exchanges would encourage young people both from China and the US to build on today's rapidly-growing interactions.

The benefits can go far beyond feel-good moments.

These connections humanize people on both sides of the Pacific and equip the next generation with important skills to tackle global opportunities such as climate tech, supply chains, artificial intelligence and even the exploration of space.

Above all, they demonstrate that real cooperation can hum along even when global politics does not.

Curiosity has a way of outpacing the need for total agreement every time.

The real story of China and US relations is playing out on screens everywhere.

Young creators are already linking people and cultures across the Pacific.

The summit of the two leaders is helping to endorse those bridges and ensure they grow into the enduring ties that define a bright future for the countries that young people will lead one day.

The author is principal consultant at Midgley & Company and an adjunct associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhu Feng

Only cooperation with China serves US interests

US President Donald Trump's visit to China, and expected head-of-state meetings, are drawing a lot of attention at a time when the world is seeing conflicts in Ukraine and the Strait of Hormuz. A key task for both Beijing and Washington is to sustain a stable, manageable and enduring bilateral relationship.

Although geopolitical experts often refer to the "Thucydides Trap" theory — a phenomenon whereby a rising power can cause fear in an established power, escalating to war — to interpret Sino-US relations, China has taken a different approach.

This is evident in the strategies it employed to counter the tariff war initiated by Washington last year, and its vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, which is supported by four global initiatives and guided by principles of mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

This approach has worked, producing steady, positive outcomes in bilateral interactions, while acting as a stabilizing force in a turbulent, ever-changing world.

In this context, Washington should take advantage of the opportunity for dialogue presented by the US leader's visit, to seek closer cooperation with China.

While some in the US who view China as their greatest "strategic competitor" and seek to contain it have done little to conceal their intentions, the broader trend of China-US exchanges and collaboration remains unstoppable.

This disconnect on the US side needs to be addressed with an objective understanding of Beijing.

After the US Supreme Court ruled in February that the US administration's imposition of reciprocal tariffs on trading partners under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act was illegal, the US side levied an additional 10 percent import surcharge on all trading partners under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

The US also introduced a series of negative measures concerning China, including the Section 301 investigations, aimed at undermining China's production capacity advantages and reducing dependence on Chinese industry and supply chains.

However, Washington should have been aware that, given China's 35 percent share of global industrial output, a rapid and complete decoupling is unattainable.

Although the US administration is trying to keep a relatively low profile on the Taiwan question and disputes in the South China Sea, its arms sales to the Chinese island in late 2025 were the largest since 1979.

Additionally, joint military exercises with the Philippines and other external forces in the South China Sea have significantly increased in frequency.

The US should not treat softened rhetoric as a short-term, tactical measure to stabilize bilateral relations.

A US-led rare earths supply alliance designed to reduce dependence on China's rare earths is closely tied to technological innovation and access to critical resources. The same is true of Washington's ambition to revitalize and expand its manufacturing sector.

However, the path to "make America great again" is not necessarily contradictory to China's great rejuvenation. China's significant growth potential, as revealed in its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), can offer US enterprises many opportunities to cooperate with their Chinese counterparts.

For China-US relations to continue providing mutual economic benefits, fostering exchanges across various social sectors, and enhancing complementary security through normal engagement and cooperation, the US side needs to foster a correct perception of China within its broader strategic framework.

Despite some challenges, Sino-US relations have remained generally stable, thanks to head-of-state diplomacy, with the two leaders maintaining frequent communication and dialogue, and recalibrating the direction of ties at critical junctures.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge, and to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

Both China and the US should make mutual respect the cornerstone, peaceful coexistence the principle and win-win cooperation the goal.

This approach will help the two countries explore the appropriate way to interact, jointly contributing to global peace and stability.

China will never follow the obsolete model of a country seeking hegemony when growing stronger. It will instead remain committed to peaceful development.

Beijing hopes that Washington can respect China's core interests and work together to properly manage differences.

In a world facing increasing turmoil, a stable China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both nations but also aligns with the widespread expectations of the international community.

The author is the dean and a professor of the School of International Studies, Nanjing University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Star power



From left: New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson, United States actor Elijah Wood, Chinese actress Gong Li, US actress Jane Fonda and South Korean director Park Chan-wook wave during the opening ceremony and premiere screening of *The Electric Kiss* at the 79th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, on Tuesday. SAMEER AL-DOUMY / AFP

Iran hardens stance on strait

Tehran moves to draft new regulations for key waterway as oil flows dwindle

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that Tehran is currently in consultations to develop regulations governing arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz based on international law.

Araghchi made the remark during a meeting in Tehran with Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, formalizing what senior officials have been signaling in recent weeks — that Iran intends to establish a new legal order for the waterway.

Last month, International Maritime Organization Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said that countries have no right to blockade international straits or impede the freedom of navigation through straits used for international transit.

Iran's arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz could face setbacks as a United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for freedom of navigation in the strait is gaining traction with 112 cosponsors, Al Jazeera reported on Wednesday.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have joined Bahrain and the United States as principal sponsors, according to the report. India, Japan, South Korea, Kenya, Argentina and most European Union member states have also signed on, it added.

More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, US and Iranian demands to end the war remain far apart.

Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear program and lift its chokehold on the strait, while Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the US blockade and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said Israeli drones struck three vehicles on the main highway south of Beirut on Wednesday, killing eight people, including a woman and her two children.

Iran has urged the United States and Israel to accept its rights and demands, warning that any new aggression would be met with a swift and regretful response.

Iranian Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik told reporters that the US and Israel would have to submit to Iran's legitimate and definitive rights, either on the battlefield or at the diplomatic table.

"If the enemy does not yield to Iran's rightful demands in diplomacy, it should expect a repeat of its past defeats on the military field," Talaei-Nik said, the Mehr News Agency reported.

The conflict is weighing heavily on global energy markets. Global oil supply will fall by around 3.9 million barrels per day across 2026 and undershoot demand because of disruptions caused by the crisis, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, with more than 1 billion barrels of Middle East supply already lost.

Brent crude futures edged down slightly to around $107 per barrel, after a three-day rally driven by the Hormuz deadlock.

Energy deals

Meanwhile, Iraq and Pakistan have cut deals with Iran to ship oil and liquefied natural gas from the Gulf, according to five sources with knowledge of the matter, Reuters reported.

In a deal between Baghdad and Tehran that has not been previously reported, Iraq secured safe passage for two very large crude carriers, each carrying about 2 million barrels of crude, that passed through the strait on Sunday.

Iraq is working to secure Iran's approval for more transits, an Iraqi oil ministry official familiar with the initial deal and current talks told Reuters, as the government seeks to safeguard the oil revenues that make up 95 percent of its budget.

A second ministry official and a shipping industry source also confirmed the talks with Tehran. All of the sources requested anonymity as they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

Similarly, two tankers loaded with Qatari liquefied natural gas are headed to Pakistan following a separate bilateral agreement between Islamabad and Tehran, two industry sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters, also asking not to be named as they were not permitted to speak with media.

In another development, the Arab League urged Iran on Tuesday to cease all hostile acts against Arab states and condemned the alleged infiltration of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps into Kuwait's Bubiyan Island, which resulted in the injury of one of the Kuwait Armed Forces' personnel.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the armed infiltration of Kuwaiti territory "constitutes a dangerous precedent that cannot be tolerated and represents a serious escalation".

Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected the claims as "baseless", saying four Iranian officers had entered Kuwait's territorial waters because of a navigation system disruption during a routine maritime patrol mission and called on Kuwaiti authorities to resolve the issue through official channels.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

US Senate approves Warsh to Federal Reserve board

NEW YORK — The United States Senate on Tuesday confirmed Kevin Warsh to a 14-year term as a Federal Reserve governor, marking a pivotal step toward his expected ascension as the next leader of the central bank.

The confirmation passed with a 51-45 vote. In a notable break from party lines, Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was the sole Democrat to join the Republican majority in supporting the appointment. Warsh will succeed Stephen Miran on the board, with his term retroactively beginning on Feb 1.

Following the vote, the Senate immediately initiated the confirmation process for Warsh's concurrent four-year term as Fed chair. The transition comes as the term of incumbent Jerome Powell is set to expire on Friday.

Warsh, 56, is a lawyer and financier who previously served as a Federal Reserve governor from 2006 to 2011, playing a key role in navigating the global financial crisis during that time. His return to the board comes amid heightened scrutiny of the central bank's political independence.

Powell has announced he intends to remain on the board as a governor after his chairmanship ends, saying he plans to keep a low profile.



Kevin Warsh testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington on April 21 during his nomination hearing to be a member and chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. JOSE LUIS MAGANA / AP

For his part, Warsh signaled a shift in direction for the Fed, calling for "regime change". His proposed strategy includes tighter coordination with the Treasury Department and the administration on nonmonetary policies.

However, the economic landscape remains challenging. A surge in global oil prices since the outbreak of the US-Israeli war against Iran has fueled domestic inflation, significantly dampening investor expectations for rate cuts this year.

Financial markets are currently pricing in a one-in-three chance of a rate hike by December. The Fed's current target range for short-term borrowing costs stands at 3.5 percent to 3.75 percent.

The Federal Open Market Committee is scheduled to hold its next policy-setting meeting on June 16-17.

Data released on Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed US prices for most goods and services surged in April.

The Consumer Price Index increased at a seasonally adjusted 0.6 percent month-on-month and 3.8 percent year-on-year. Stripping out food and energy, the core CPI ticked up 0.4 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

The year-on-year headline rate of inflation hit the highest level since May 2023.

Analysts said the war in Iran is to blame, as prices have increased because of higher oil prices stemming from the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, through which some 20 percent of the world's oil flows.

Dean Baker, cofounder of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, said the war has sent oil prices higher and "we are beginning to see ripple effects in other areas".

"Prices are now outpacing wages, meaning that workers are on average worse off than they were a year ago," he said.

XINHUA

Australia extends EV tax breaks as fuel fears grow

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
alexishooi@chinadaily.com.cn

Australia has extended an electric vehicle purchase incentive program as it aims to cut dependence on fossil fuels amid the Middle East crisis, a move expected to benefit Chinese automakers that have been gaining ground in the country in recent years.

The federal budget, unveiled by Treasurer Jim Chalmers on Tuesday, keeps in place current tax exemptions for EVs under the Electric Car Discount policy until March next year, before the discounts — which go back to July 2022 — are wound down starting April 2027.

The ongoing support for EVs is part of measures to strengthen "fuel resilience", as the conflict in the Middle East has been "pushing up prices, pushing down growth, and punishing Australians", Chalmers said in his budget speech.

Hussein Dia, a professor of transport technology and sustainability at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, told China Daily that "one of the clearest signals" of the budget announcement is that "Australia is moving from early EV adoption toward a broader transport system transition".

"The focus is gradually expanding beyond short-term incentives toward longer-term resilience, infrastructure, productivity and energy security," Dia said.

"The continuation, but gradual recalibration, of the Electric Car Discount suggests the government believes the EV market is now maturing. The policy has played an important role in normalizing EVs in Australia and accelerating early uptake," he said.

Recent fuel disruptions and geopolitical uncertainty in global oil markets have also reinforced the importance of reducing dependence on imported liquid fuels, he added.

"In that sense, transport policy is increasingly becoming energy policy. Electrification is now being viewed not only through an environmental lens, but also through economic resilience and national security lenses," he said.

The continuation of the EV discount comes amid record sales, with EVs accounting for 16.4 percent of all new vehicle sales in Australia in April, according to the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

"The Electric Car Discount has provided important stimulus to the market, and its continuation will support the growth of EVs," the chamber's chief executive, Tony Weber, said.

Chinese players' role

The purchase incentive is expected to benefit Chinese automakers, which made up four of the top 10 selling brands in April, with one of BYD's best-selling EV models alone recording 1,780 units, or an increase of 139.6 percent year-on-year, according to the chamber.

Dia said Chinese EV makers are playing an increasingly important role in the Australian market.

"Brands such as BYD have helped expand the range of more affordable EV models available to Australian consumers, particularly during a cost-of-living period where price remains one of the biggest barriers to adoption," he said.

"Increased competition is helping make EVs more mainstream and accelerating the transition away from imported fossil fuels."

Aman Gaur, head of legal, policy and advocacy at the Electric Vehicle Council, likewise referred to the growing role of Chinese carmakers in Australia, which has a "competitive automotive market with over 60 brands providing a variety of cars for all lifestyles".

"Chinese manufacturers have added more options for Australians with a great range of electric cars on offer," he said.

Labour divisions in UK overshadow King's Speech

By JULIAN SHEA in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer sought to shift the focus from personalities to policy on Wednesday as the King's Speech to Parliament set out his government's legislative agenda for the coming year.

The speech, written by the government but delivered with royal pageantry by King Charles III, outlined new initiatives on energy security, defense, immigration and education reform, but it was the internal wranglings of the governing Labour Party that continued to dominate the headlines across the UK.

Starmer, who has been in office for less than two years, has faced mounting pressure following Labour's dismal performance in last week's local elections, with his leadership being picked out as one of the main causes of voter rejection.

On Tuesday, four ministers resigned in protest against Starmer's continued leadership. The most high-profile departure was Health Secretary Wes Streeting, widely regarded as a serious contender to replace him.

Another possible candidate would be Andy Burnham, though the Greater Manchester mayor would first need to return to Parliament before mounting a leadership bid, likely requiring a sitting Labour lawmaker to vacate a seat and trigger a by-election.

On Wednesday morning, Streeting was called in to Starmer's Downing Street office for a face-to-face meeting, leaving less than 20 minutes later.

Around lunchtime, The Daily Telegraph reported that Streeting was set to quit his post, with an ally saying he was "going to go for it" after the meeting, and that a leadership contest could be triggered as soon as Thursday.

Starmer's spokesperson, meanwhile, told reporters on Wednesday that "the prime minister has full confidence in the health secretary".

The BBC's political editor, Chris Mason, quoted a Starmer loyalist as saying that Streeting lacked sufficient backing to trigger a formal leadership challenge, while Burnham "doesn't have a seat, for all this noise". "Wes has bottled it and caused massive damage and instability in the process," the ally added.

Sky News reported that more than 100 Labour lawmakers have added their names to a letter saying the party needs to focus on "working together to deliver the change the country needs ... this is no time for a leadership contest", but it is believed that around 90 others have come out and called on Starmer to go.

In a further blow to his authority, 11 major trade unions affiliated with the Labour Party have issued a joint statement calling the local election results "devastating", and saying they have no confidence in Starmer's continued leadership.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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COMMENT

Editorials

China ready to work with US in spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit

While global turbulence does not always stem from shifts in major-country relations, stable and healthy ties between the world's two largest economies can help facilitate the easing of international turmoil as their intertwined economic relationship is a stabilizer for the world economy.

Under such circumstances, US President Donald Trump's state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday has naturally attracted wide attention as head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable and strategically vital role in guiding China-US ties.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Wednesday, China welcomes Trump's visit, during which the two leaders will have in-depth exchanges of views on key issues concerning bilateral ties and global peace and development.

The Sino-US economic and trade consultations held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday also serve to highlight the two sides' commitment to managing their differences through dialogue and negotiation. The candid, in-depth and constructive exchanges on economic and trade issues of mutual concern, as well as on further expanding practical cooperation, carry on the momentum of the previous six rounds of talks and show the complementarity of Sino-US economic ties.

It is precisely this pragmatism that — despite their differences — has enabled practical cooperation between China and the United States to continue demonstrating vitality and potential under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy over the past years — even in the face of attempts by some to derail it.

The business delegation led by Trump on his visit to China, which consists of business leaders of some big-name companies in a wide range of strategic sectors, including semiconductors, finance and artificial intelligence, further illustrates the willingness of the US business community to expand mutually beneficial cooperation with China.

The two countries possess broad space for cooperation in fields such as AI, health, green development, advanced manufacturing and supply-chain stability during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period and beyond.

Experience has proved that China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. It is imperative that they strengthen their dialogue and cooperation in strategic sectors, particularly AI governance. The initiative on AI governance Beijing has put forward reflects China's commitment to promoting international cooperation on AI governance and ensuring that the era-defining technology benefits all humanity.

China's cooperative spirit is embodied in its four global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative.

These initiatives underpin the country's international engagement across key areas, including its major-country diplomacy with the US. The four global initiatives respond to the common aspirations of the international community for peace, development, fairness, justice and mutual respect. And they are public goods China has contributed to advance world peace and development.

China does not seek spheres of influence, ideological confrontation or cliques. It should be clear that no country can address the grave global challenges the world faces today on its own, no matter how strong it is. Still less can any country achieve security through confrontation or "decoupling", not to mention at the cost of others' security or crossing others' red lines.

China supports multilateralism and an open world economy. Such concepts are rooted not only in China's diplomatic practices, but also in the principles of the modern international order established after World War II, including sovereign equality, peaceful coexistence and multilateral cooperation.

The world does not need a new Cold War — it needs peace and development achieved through dialogue and cooperation, grounded in responsible major-country diplomacy. When China and the US work together to promote peace, development and win-win cooperation, they serve not only their shared interests but also those of the entire world. Against this backdrop, Trump's visit to China has raised expectations that, even with their differences, China and the US can still engage in candid communication, expand practical cooperation and jointly shoulder responsibilities for global peace and development.

As Guo said in reply to questions about the first visit by a US president in nine years, China stands ready to work with the US in the spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit — expanding cooperation and managing differences — so as to bring greater stability and certainty to the world.

The more volatile the world situation becomes, the more major countries should work together to function as stabilizers. China is willing to work with all countries, including the US, to strengthen communication, properly manage differences and deepen win-win cooperation.

Country's innovation boon to the world

China's continuous efforts in scientific and technological innovation and its high-standard opening-up are having marked effects on both its economy and international cooperation.

Recent data indicate a shift in China's manufacturing industry toward high-end production. This reflects the country's transition to innovation-driven growth.

The country has made rapid progress in the development of emerging industries, with some strategic sectors, including artificial intelligence, intelligent robots, integrated circuits, advanced materials, new energy and biomedicine, growing rapidly. Future industries, including quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, embodied intelligence and 6G, are also gaining momentum.

The technological innovation in the field of AI is transforming the Chinese economy while having a profound effect globally. China is rapidly emerging as a major force in global AI advancement. As of early this year, the country's core AI industry was projected to be worth more than 1.2 trillion yuan ($176.71 billion), with an annual growth rate nearing 30 percent. China now holds 60 percent of the world's AI patents.

Chinese scientists unveiled six major achievements at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference that concluded on Wednesday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Among them was a generative genomic large model named Carbon, which is being hailed as the "DeepSeek" for the life sciences field due to its nearly hundredfold improvement in computational efficiency.

The rapid development of China's AI sector is bolstered by both policies and strategic planning. In the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), AI is identified as a key driver of new quality productive forces. The government has launched a comprehensive "AI Plus" initiative. This policy framework supports AI research and accelerates its application across sectors.

Thanks to the progress made, AI and other technologies are empowering industries across the board. China has established tens of thousands of "smart factories" nationwide and accounts for more than half of the global increase in industrial robot installations. According to the World Economic Forum, China now boasts the world's highest number of "lighthouse factories", accounting for 40 percent of the world's total. These factories employ cutting-edge technologies to achieve more efficient and sustainable production processes.

China's experience in applied AI, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare, offers a reference for global industry transformation. The improvement in China's technological innovation capabilities has led to a substantial increase in its industrial competitiveness, enabling the country to transition from "running after" to "running together" and even "leading the way" in some fields. China's intelligent computing power was second only to the United States last year.

China's competitiveness in the open-source path for algorithmic models and its position in computing hardware capabilities further solidify its status as a major force in the AI industry.

The scale and network advantages of China's digital infrastructure are equally impressive. By 2025, the country had 4.84 million 5G base stations, accounting for about 60 percent of the world's total, and a staggering 74.99 million kilometers of optical fiber cables.

Additionally, as the world's largest producer of solar and wind power, China has a reliable and low-cost supply of green energy for power-intensive computing centers, further enhancing its role in the global AI ecosystem.

By sharing its innovation and experiences with the world, China is offering a new development path that emphasizes collaboration and openness, encouraging other countries to engage with AI in a way that promotes shared growth and mutual benefit. This is a vision of a connected world, where technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier.

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Contact us at:

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 692 0900 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Asier Sanz



Opinion Line

Collaboration, science effective defenses against hantavirus

The recent outbreak of the Andes hantavirus aboard the cruise ship MV *Hondius* is a reminder to the international community that humanity's battle against infectious diseases is far from over.

While the World Health Organization has assessed that the overall global public health risk is low, the incident has nevertheless triggered concern because the Andes virus is currently the only known hantavirus strain capable of limited human-to-human transmission.

As of early this week, multiple confirmed and suspected cases linked to the cruise ship have been reported across several countries, and multiple deaths were recorded. Coordinated by WHO and relevant national authorities, international medical evacuations, quarantine arrangements and contact-tracing efforts are underway.

China's disease-control authorities have responded promptly. According to the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, no cases of human infection with the Andes virus have been reported in China as of early this week, nor has any natural host capable of carrying the virus been identified within the country. Wang Shiwen, deputy director of the National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention under China CDC, told the media that the risk of imported transmission and large-scale outbreaks in China remains extremely low.

Experts further clarified an important scientific fact often overlooked amid sensational headlines: human-to-human transmission is not a common characteristic of hantaviruses in general. Under normal circumstances, hantavirus infection mainly occurs through contact with infected rodents or exposure to contaminated urine, feces and saliva. While the Andes virus represents a rare exception, transmission generally requires close and prolonged contact in enclosed environments. Existing evidence indicates that such transmission remains limited and controllable with proper public health measures.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the international community has learned that panic, politicization and disinformation can spread faster than the virus itself, thus undermining global prevention and control efforts.

The current hantavirus incident once again demonstrates the importance of adhering to science in the face of disease outbreaks. Yet climate factors have made it harder to respond by expanding rodent habitats and extending transmission seasons. Countries must strengthen their early warning systems, improve cross-border information sharing and enhance emergency coordination mechanisms. Infectious diseases do not respect national boundaries. The multinational response surrounding the outbreak aboard MV *Hondius* illustrates the importance of timely information sharing among governments, public health agencies and international organizations.

Equally important is the need to uphold the coordinating role of the WHO. Throughout the current outbreak, WHO has worked within the framework of the International Health Regulations to facilitate information exchange, coordinate contact tracing and provide scientific risk assessments. WHO has consistently stressed that the overall public risk remains low while urging continued vigilance and monitoring.

Professionalism and multilateral coordination are precisely what the world needs to confront future health threats. Attempts to stigmatize countries, float conspiracy theories or undermine international cooperation would only weaken the collective capacity to respond effectively.

At the same time, the outbreak underscores the importance of strengthening public health literacy. Public health experts note that ordinary preventive measures — such as avoiding contact with rodents and contaminated environments, maintaining hygiene standards and seeking timely medical treatment if symptoms arise — remain effective. WHO's hantavirus guidance also highlights the importance of rodent control, sanitation and rapid clinical management. Severely unwell patients can significantly improve their prognosis through early intensive medical care.

Humanity has paid a heavy price during past pandemics. Only through scientific response, openness, solidarity and strengthened global governance can the world better safeguard public health security. The hantavirus outbreak should serve as another reminder that international cooperation and respect for science remain humanity's strongest defenses against infectious diseases.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Experience economy will help upgrade businesses

Editor's note: *China's experience market reached 18.4 trillion yuan ($2.7 trillion) in 2025, a 22.6 percent year-on-year increase. China.org.cn spoke to Wei Xiang, a researcher in the National Academy of Economic Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, about the development of the experience economy. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The shift from buying goods to buying experiences marks a structural evolution driven by a growing demand for personalized and emotionally resonant consumption. The experience economy thrives on anticipation and the lasting memories created afterward.

Two major forces are fueling the rise of the experience economy. The first is the transformation of the broader economic structure. Demand for purely functional consumption has largely matured. What is growing now is demand for higher-level services and emotionally engaging experiences. People increasingly seek meaning, individuality and emotional resonance through consumption.

The second force is demographic change. Aging societies are reshaping consumption patterns. Older consumers tend to favor slower, more immersive forms of spending that emphasize enjoyment, health, culture and emotional fulfillment. This demographic shift also aligns with the development of experience-based industries.

The rise of the experience economy offers a broader lesson for both governments and businesses. The boundaries between production, consumption, services and experiences will increasingly blur. Future industries should create participatory experiences in which consumers themselves become part of the value-creation process.

The experience economy also generates new forms of personal value. One is cognitive value. Experiences expand people's horizons and reshape their understanding of the world. Personal growth does not result solely from meeting influential people or receiving external opportunities. Often, it is the direct experience itself that encourages individuals to improve their own perspectives and capacities.

Another is social value. Social interaction increasingly includes teamwork, openness, organizational abilities and other forms of noncognitive skills developed through shared experiences. In the future, social interaction may extend beyond human relationships to include interaction with intelligent machines and digital environments, creating entirely new forms of connection.

For the experience economy to remain sustainable, two capabilities are especially important. First, businesses must understand the relationship between functionality and emotion. Future competition will not depend solely on marketing, but also on the ability to measure, detect and respond to emotional change during production and service delivery.

Second, companies must develop stronger flexible customization capabilities. Businesses must have the ability to transform diverse emotional and experiential needs into scalable production systems.

Ultimately, the development of the experience economy will accelerate the transition toward higher-value service sectors and help drive the broader upgrading of economic structures. On the social side, it will enhance public well-being. Through thoughtfully designed experiences, individuals can enjoy a stronger sense of fulfillment, identity and emotional satisfaction. Such experiences do not necessarily need to be expensive.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

TARIQ H. MALIK

From AI visibility to developmental leadership

Turning technological strength into governance credibility and cross-border cooperation



Artificial intelligence is often framed as a race for models, chips and market share. However, discussions at the Forum on the Development of International Science and Technology Organizations and Global Science and Technology Governance, held on March 28 during the Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing, emphasized that the more important question goes beyond technological competition. For China, the central challenge is not simply whether the country is visible in AI, but whether that visibility can be converted into stronger governance, more credible international leadership and deeper cross-border cooperation. That is where the next phase of China's AI story will be decided.

China's strength in AI should be understood through its broader development path. Its developmental narrative could be described through four qualities: an equalizer, a bricoleur, a systemizer and a socioeconomic weaver. These are more than rhetorical labels. Together, they capture a development logic that widens access, combines tools pragmatically, organizes complexity at scale and links technology to broader social and economic transformation. This helps explain how a technological field becomes embedded in the wider fabric of production, administration and modernization.

This also helps clarify what is distinctive about China's position today. Many countries can develop advanced technologies, but few can connect them to long-term developmental coordination. China's historical policy trajectory, including the cumulative discipline of the five-year plans, has given it an unusual capacity to link technological ambition with industrial scaling and organizational follow-through. Over successive five-year plans, priorities have evolved in a structured manner — from early emphasis on informatization and industrial digitization, to the integration of digital technologies with the real economy, and more recently to the elevation of AI as a strategic driver of modernization.

In that sense, China's rise in AI reflects a deeper developmental logic: the ability to move from experimentation to infrastructure, from innovation to production and from technical potential to system-wide application. The more pressing question now is what comes next. If earlier stages of development focused on catching up, scaling up and building industrial capacity, the next stage requires China to play a stronger role in shaping the governance language around AI itself.

Governance should therefore move to the center of the discussion. AI is a matter of legitimacy, rules, institutions and cooperation. The narrative alignment theory helps explain this shift. Narratives are not decorative additions to technology; they shape the categories through which technology is understood, justified and accepted. They influence whether AI is seen as a source of fear or trust, fragmentation or cooperation, exclusion or development. They also affect whose rules, organizations and standards gain authority internationally. At this stage, leadership can no longer be measured only by who builds the most advanced technology. It should also be measured by who can connect technology to legitimate and credible governance frameworks.

This has direct implications for China. The country already has substantial material strengths: scale, industrial capacity, digital ecosystems and a strong policy commitment to scientific and technological advancement. But technological strength alone does not automatically generate narrative authority. A country may be highly capable in production and application, yet still remain less influential in defining the interpretive framework through which that capability is understood globally. China now faces a strategic transition. To move from AI visibility to developmental leadership, it should present AI not only as a field of innovation, but as part of a broader story of public value.

China's next task is to institutionalize AI through clearer governance pathways. One is rule-making: contributing more actively to technical standards, ethical protocols, data governance principles and cross-border interoperability. Another is organizational leadership: embedding AI in durable, credible and cooperative institutions, including international science and technology organizations, university networks, professional associations and public-private platforms linking research, industry and policy. A third is narrative clarity: communicating AI not only as a driver of growth, but also as a contributor to order, inclusion and long-term development. This requires a language that is internationally intelligible as well as institutionally persuasive.

Global science and technology governance is increasingly shaped by legitimacy and coordination, not by technology alone. If China wants to play a more prominent role in this environment, it should build frameworks in which innovation and governance develop together. That means showing how AI can support public administration, industrial resilience, the green transition, healthcare, education and cross-regional learning. It also means engaging more deeply in international cooperation, so that China is seen not merely as a powerful producer of technology, but as a constructive participant in shaping the rules and organizational architectures through which technology serves development. The future of leadership in AI will depend not only on invention but on the ability to align innovation with legitimate governance.

There is also a deeper historical lesson here. Successful economies often decline when they become imbalanced. Why did technological spirit and innovative capacity shift from one country to another, leaving once-successful economies behind? The answer points to an imbalance. Development weakens when institutions and structures no longer align with new realities. This lesson matters for AI as well. The danger is not only technological lag; it is also the failure to balance invention with meaning, production with legitimacy and capability with trust. China's opportunity is that it can still build this balance. It can connect technological advances with governance design before deeper misalignment takes hold.

China's position between the Global North and the Global South further strengthens this possibility. It is unusually placed to act as a bridge: learning from industrialized economies while also speaking to the developmental aspirations of emerging ones. This gives China a distinctive opportunity in AI governance. It can help formulate AI not simply as a luxury of the richest economies, but as a developmental instrument that can be adapted across different institutional contexts. In that sense, China's contribution could be larger than national advancement alone. It could help widen the global conversation from technological competition to developmental inclusion.

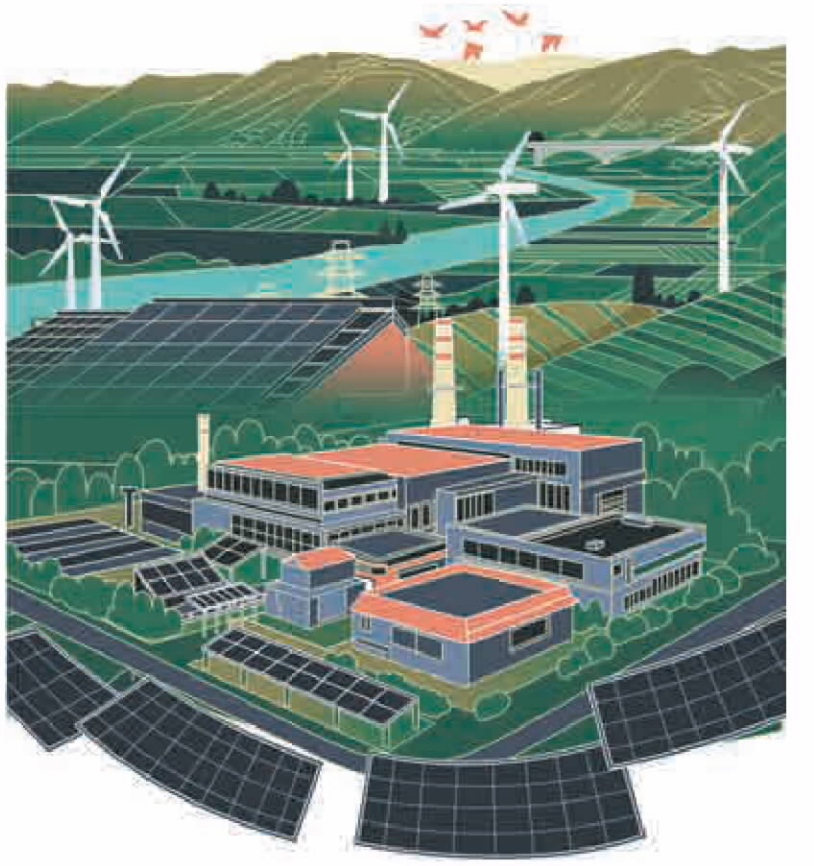
For this reason, the most important transition is conceptual as much as technical. China does not need only more AI. It needs stronger alignment between AI, governance and development, building on the basis of Beijing's series of provisional regulations over the past years and its five-year industrial projections. It must translate technological capability into governance credibility, industrial strength into institutional trust and national achievement into cross-border collaborative leadership. This is not a soft addition to hard technology. It is the condition under which technological strength gains lasting authority.

In the end, the countries that matter most in AI will not be those that simply build powerful systems. They will be the ones that embed those systems in legitimate institutions, credible rules and cooperative international relationships. China has already demonstrated considerable capacity in development and innovation of smart technologies. Its next challenge is to show that this capacity can also help shape a stable, trusted and development-oriented governance future for AI.

The author is a professor of innovation studies at Liaoning University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ZHANG FANG

Integrating smart tech and green innovation

Digital technology and systematic governance pave the way for high-quality green development

The green transition is no longer a matter of choice but a defining imperative for high-quality development in China. The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, approved during the 2026 National People's Congress, sets a binding target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 17 percent, while raising the share of the core digital economy industries in GDP to 12.5 percent.



In terms of industrial development, the outline introduces a new strategic direction centered on "intelligent and green development, and integrated innovation of industries and technologies". Compared with the earlier five-year plan, which emphasized "upgrading of industry and value chains, in addition to intelligent and green development", the shift toward integrated approaches signals the entry into a new stage of development that has systemic integration as its core feature, as China accelerates its green and low-carbon transition to form a new low-carbon innovation paradigm driven by artificial intelligence technologies.

The integrated innovation of industries and technologies in the 15th Five-Year Plan period can be found in the deep coupling of electricity and computing power. With the rapid advancement of AI technologies, demand for clean computing power is surging.

According to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, electricity consumption by computing centers in China reached 150 billion kilowatt-hours in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 15.4 percent, with a projection to reach above 400 billion kWh by 2030 in the medium to high growth scenario. Against this backdrop, the 15th Five-Year Plan explicitly calls for the coordinated deployment of green electricity and computing power, while the 2026 Government Work Report has, for the first time, included "computing-power and electricity synergy" as part of the new infrastructure initiative.

Computing power and electricity synergy refers to the systemic integration of computing infrastructure with the electricity power system through digital technologies, intelligent algorithms, and information networks. On the one hand, models such as direct green power supply and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems help tap into the abundant clean energy in the western part of China, effectively reducing energy costs. On the other hand, some computing tasks are flexible, and can be interrupted and migrated by intelligent scheduling. This approach shifts the increased consumption of electricity to phases with lower electricity costs or lower network utilization through peak load shifting. It substantially transforms data centers from passive electricity consumers into active regulation units, thereby improving the utilization of renewable energy. This model addresses the curtailment of renewable energy and meets the growing green energy demand of computing power, achieving a mutually reinforcing balance between the environmental value of green electricity and the economic value of computing power.

Accurate carbon emissions accounting driven by precise data is the foundational pillar of carbon governance. The effectiveness of carbon reduction efforts depends critically on the transparency and verifiability of carbon accounting systems. China is accelerating the development of a unified national factor database of greenhouse gas emissions, while building an integrated "space-air-ground" monitoring network using satellite remote sensing, drones and ground sensors to ensure that carbon emissions and carbon sinks can be accurately measured and effectively managed.

Progress is also being made in tracing carbon emissions from electricity consumption. By establishing a provincial-level, time-of-use and location-specific factor database of electricity carbon emissions, companies can trace the sources and destinations of their carbon emissions. This technical pathway is expected to upgrade green development evaluation from traditional annual average indicators to higher-frequency, more granular metrics, providing scientific support for precise carbon reduction.

This data-driven foundation enables a broader transformation: moving beyond isolated improvements to achieve intelligent, systemic integration. The most compelling manifestation of this shift is occurring within the industrial sector, particularly in the realm of energy-saving equipment.

In March 2026, four central government departments, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, rolled out a three-year action plan to accelerate the high-quality development of energy-saving equipment. The core thrust of the plan is to shift from optimizing equipment-level energy efficiency to achieving energy conservation. This policy orientation reflects three significant shifts: Technological innovation extends from equipment efficiency to the full chain, and from materials to processes; operating system coordination upgrades from stand-alone operation to wide-range high efficiency and precise matching; and digital empowerment advances from passive response to active optimization, using AI to enable cluster-level intelligent scheduling of energy-consuming units.

This direction is propelling China's energy-saving equipment industry from a single focus on individual equipment efficiency to a new stage characterized by system integration, intelligent drive and cross-sectoral convergence. It signifies a transformation in value creation from equipment sales to system services and a shift in technical pathways from local optimization to global optimization.

The new paradigm for China's green and low-carbon development, with computing-power-electricity synergy as a key pathway, data-driven carbon governance as a foundational pillar, and system-level intelligent integration as its technological signature, is accelerating a profound shift from granular, isolated optimization to system-wide integration innovation. This paradigm represents not only a strategic response to intensifying global green competition, but also a distinctive contribution of Chinese wisdom to global decarbonization efforts.

The author is the vice-director of the Center for Science, Technology and Education Policy at Tsinghua University and an associate professor at the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

Striking the right chord



Visitors check out handcrafted acoustic guitars at a guitar industrial park in Yongzhou's Dong'an county, Central China's Hunan province, on Monday. The park boasts a complete guitar manufacturing chain, home to more than 30 musical instrument manufacturers and supporting upstream and downstream enterprises. The industrial base produces a full range of guitar products with an annual output of over 500,000 guitars in 2025 that were exported to more than 60 countries and regions worldwide. ZHAO ZHONGZHI / XINHUA

Metis TechBio records HK's largest healthcare IPO in '26

Company's float signals maturing AI pharma with diversified biz models

By **LI JING**
lijing2009@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese mainland's artificial intelligence drug-delivery developer Metis TechBio Co Ltd raised more than HK$2.1 billion ($270 million) in its Hong Kong initial public offering on Wednesday, marking the largest healthcare listing in Hong Kong so far this year and underscoring strong investor interest in how AI could reshape pharmaceutical development.

Founded six years ago, the Beijing-based biotech firm issued about 201.2 million H shares in its global offering. Chris Lai, the company's co-founder and CEO, said the listing would help accelerate the company's goal of applying AI-driven nanotechnology to enable targeted drug delivery and new therapeutic approaches.

The listing places Metis alongside two earlier Hong Kong-listed peers — XtalPi Holdings Ltd and Insilico Medicine Cayman TopCo — referred to as Hong Kong's "AI drug discovery trio", though the companies pursue different commercial strategies in the rapidly evolving sector. XtalPi is a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based AI drug discovery company, while Insilico Medicine is a global AI-driven biotech firm with strong research roots in China.

AI has attracted billions of dollars globally as pharmaceutical companies seek to shorten drug development timelines, but the industry is still testing whether these technologies can generate sustainable revenues.

China's AI drug discovery sector is moving from laboratory experimentation toward early commercial validation, said Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University.

According to consultancy iiMedia Research, the sector's revenue expanded from about 70 million yuan ($9.7 million) in 2019 to more than 600 million yuan by 2025, reflecting rapid growth in AI-driven drug development in China.

Early financial milestones among industry peers reflect that shift. XtalPi reported its first annual profit in 2025, while Insilico — though still loss-making — has begun generating tens of millions of dollars in revenue from licensing deals and research collaborations.

"The key question for the industry is no longer whether the technology works," Tian said. "It is how to turn it into scalable profit."

Metis has taken a different route from its peers by focusing on nanotechnology-based drug delivery, a technically complex step in turning promising molecules into effective medicines.

Efficient delivery systems determine whether drugs can reach targeted tissues while minimizing side effects — a challenge highlighted during the development of mRNA vaccines and other next-generation therapies.

"Large-molecule drugs are becoming increasingly important, and effective delivery is a core bottleneck," said Liu Jing, professor of accounting and finance at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business.

"AI gives companies like Metis an opportunity to narrow the technological gap with established Western leaders."

Metis' core platform, NanoForge, combines AI models, molecular simulation and high-throughput screening to design lipid nanoparticles and other nanomaterial drug carriers.

According to its prospectus, the platform has generated more than 10 pipeline programs, including several clinical-stage candidates. Its most advanced candidate, MTS-004, has completed Phase III clinical trials in China for pseudobulbar affect, a neurological disorder for which there are currently limited treatment options domestically, said the company.

Like many biotech startups, Metis is still in a heavy investment phase.

Revenue rose to 105 million yuan in 2025 from 1.5 million yuan a year earlier, largely due to an upfront payment tied to licensing rights for MTS-004.

The company reported a net loss of 392 million yuan in 2025, narrowing from 499 million yuan the previous year.

The company said about half of the IPO proceeds will fund expansion of its AI infrastructure and nanomaterial platform, while roughly 20 percent will fund ongoing and planned clinical trials.

Metis' listing also highlights how the AI pharma sector is diverging into several business models.

One approach, represented by XtalPi, treats AI primarily as a tech platform, providing computational research services and automated laboratory capabilities to pharmaceutical clients.

Insilico has adopted an AI-biotech strategy, using algorithms to design new drug candidates and advancing them into clinical trials before licensing them to pharmaceutical partners — a strategy with higher potential rewards but also higher financial risks.

Metis represents a more specialized strategy, applying AI specifically to the drug-delivery layer rather than the entire discovery pipeline.

"These paths reflect a broader debate between platform strategies and vertical specialization," Tian said, adding that companies capable of integrating both approaches may ultimately build stronger competitive advantages.

Despite renewed enthusiasm for AI drug development, analysts say capital markets are becoming more selective.

"Valuations are no longer driven purely by technological narratives," Tian said. "Investors are increasingly looking at clinical pipelines, partnerships with major pharmaceutical companies and tangible commercial contracts."

Metis' IPO attracted heavy demand, with the Hong Kong public tranche more than 6,900 times oversubscribed and the international placement 82 times oversubscribed, the company said.

The offering drew several cornerstone investors, including BlackRock, which subscribed about $50 million, as well as a State-backed investment fund under China Reform Holdings, which made its first investment in an AI pharma company.

Zero-tariff policy boosts Hunan-Africa biz ties

CHANGSHA — When more than 6,000 bottles of South African wine cleared customs at Changsha Huanghua International Airport in Central China's Hunan province on May 1, the importer received an immediate benefit from China's expanded tariff-free treatment for African goods, which amounted to 21,000 yuan ($3,093) in duty savings.

According to Zhang Xin, chairman of Hunan Express Wisdom Information Technology Co Ltd, South African wine was previously subject to a 14 percent tariff in China. Now that the tariff has been slashed to zero, the company anticipates an annual cost reduction of about 5 million yuan.

This shipment was among the first in Hunan to benefit after China expanded zero-tariff treatment to goods from all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, broadening an earlier policy that covered the least-developed countries among them.

Under the upgraded policy, China has become the first major economy to offer unilateral, across-the-board zero-tariff treatment to all its African diplomatic partners and to all least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

For this inland Chinese province, one of the country's busiest regional players in terms of trade with Africa, the tariff cut is more than just a customs adjustment. Local officials and companies see it as a way to lower import costs and draw more African raw materials and consumer goods through Hunan, including some products bound for re-export.

Hunan has spent years trying to position itself as an inland gateway for China-Africa commerce, using the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and pilot zone for in-depth China-Africa economic and trade cooperation as its main platforms. The province's trade with Africa has grown by an average of 15 percent a year to 58 billion yuan, ranking first among provinces in central and western China.

The latest move follows an earlier policy that took effect on Dec 1, 2024, when China granted zero-tariff treatment on all tariff lines to the least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic ties, including 33 African countries.

From that day to March 31, Changsha Customs processed around 26.98 million yuan in tariff reductions for Hunan imports from those least-developed African countries.

The policy has, notably, coincided with stronger import growth. Hunan's imports from Africa rose 27.2 percent year-on-year to 30.92 billion yuan in 2025. In the first four months of 2026, its total trade with Africa reached 18.16 billion yuan, up 8.8 percent from a year earlier, with imports increasing 29.4 percent to 10.41 billion yuan.

The new broader coverage could have a bigger effect because it involves several of Hunan's main African suppliers, including Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Between January 2025 and March 2026, imports from these five countries accounted for 98.1 percent of the total tariffs collected from Hunan's imports from Africa.

Lan Shengbin, deputy head of Changsha Customs, said some Hunan manufacturers had previously paid tariffs of 7 to 10 percent on components from countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Removing such duties will lower production costs and help companies diversify their supply chains, he said.

Hunan is trying to turn its tariff savings into a broader trade model, using the province as a point for importing, processing and redistributing African goods, including some products re-exported overseas.

One example came in July 2024, when 400 fresh roses from Kenya were imported into Changsha and then re-exported through the Changsha Huanghua Comprehensive Bonded Zone to Uzbekistan. It was China's first re-export transaction involving African fresh flowers, according to Changsha Customs.

Hunan Xiyue Culture Media Co Ltd, the importer, now brings in flowers, fruit and ornamental fish from Africa, some of which are shipped on to overseas markets.

Huang Zinan, a company executive, said the tariff cuts would reduce import costs, improve cash flow and allow African products to be sold at more competitive prices.

Consumer goods are another target. During the May Day holiday, an African goods market in Changsha drew approximately 89,000 visitors over six days. Organizers said lower import costs for raw materials had allowed prices to be reduced on some products, including chocolate made with Ghanaian cocoa, shea-butter products from Mali and coffee from Zambia.

Hunan Yufei Industry Investment Co Ltd, which helped organize the market, said its Quality African Products brand now covers more than 400 products from 13 African countries, ranging from coffee and avocados to spices.

Hunan authorities are seeking to turn the tariff change into a wider trade push. In late April, the provincial commerce department announced seven measures covering expanded imports from Africa, overseas warehouse services, industrial capacity cooperation and more China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo activities in African countries.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



An African goods market is pictured during the May Day holiday in Changsha, Hunan province, on May 1. DENG YILIN / XINHUA

Major PV project launched to directly power computing facilities

By **ZHENG XIN**
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China has officially launched its first large-scale computing-electricity synergy project with direct green power supply, marking a milestone in the nation's massive commitment to building a unified, nationwide computing network by physically linking desert renewable energy directly to digital infrastructure.

The 500,000-kilowatt photovoltaic power station located in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region began operations recently. It signifies the first time that wind and solar resources from China's vast deserts are being funneled directly into data center loads through dedicated transmission lines, bypassing the traditional detours of the national power grid.

The facility is part of a larger 2-million-kW first-phase development involving a total investment of 8.7 billion yuan ($1.28 billion), which includes 1.5 million kW of wind power scheduled for full integration by September.

China established the "East Data, West Computing" initiative in 2022, a mega data project aimed at accelerating the development of an integrated national computing network.

Once the first phase is fully operational, it will provide 2.29 billion kilowatt-hours of green electricity annually to the large computing base in Zhongwei, Ningxia.

At the heart of this project is the concept of "direct green power supply". Traditionally, renewable energy is fed into the public grid, where it mixes with coal-fired power before reaching consumers. Direct supply, however, utilizes dedicated "point-to-point" transmission lines and "dual-track" supply systems.

In the Zhongwei project, new data center loads are served via physical direct lines, while existing loads utilize bilateral market trading. This setup allows data centers to achieve a high "green power ratio" while significantly reducing transmission costs and carbon footprints.

To ensure stability, the project employs a wind-solar complementary model that sees PV power dominate during the day, while wind power takes over at night. It is supported by on-site energy storage to smooth out fluctuations.

The launch coincides with the nation's efforts to synchronize energy and digital strategies. The National Energy Administration recently said it would permit renewable energy projects to supply green electricity directly to multiple users via dedicated lines.

According to the NEA, new policies will be released in the near future to perfect these synergy frameworks, guiding the relocation of energy-intensive computing facilities to regions rich in renewable resources, such as Ningxia Hui and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

Experts believe the Zhongwei project provides a blueprint for the rest of the country.

"By establishing a direct physical link between the energy source and digital load, we are solving the geographical mismatch between where energy is produced and where data is processed," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University. "This not only lowers the power usage effectiveness of data centers, but also insulates the digital economy from electricity price fluctuations."

Looking ahead, the Zhongwei project plans a second phase that will bring total capacity to 4.6 million kW with a total investment of nearly 20 billion yuan.

As China continues to expand its digital infrastructure, the synergy between "bits" and "watts" is set to become the primary engine driving the nation's high-quality, low-carbon development, Lin said.

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BUSINESS

New mall aims to meet evolving needs

Site's owner takes different approach, mixing commerce, culture and community together

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Visitors entering Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, might be surprised to find that luxury brands are not front and center.

Instead, the first floor is mainly dominated by lifestyle and experiential retailers, including collective toy companies Pop Mart and Jellycat, as well as the folding bicycle brand Brompton. The second floor features sports and outdoor labels alongside e-commerce brands founded by online influencers, reflecting a shift in consumer preferences toward experiences rather than prestige alone.

The 390,200-square-meter project, developed by Hang Lung Properties Ltd, is the company's 11th venture in the Chinese mainland. Known for managing luxury shopping malls in cities such as Shanghai and Wuxi, Jiangsu province, Hang Lung is taking a different approach in Hangzhou — integrating commerce, culture and community to establish Westlake 66 as both a commercial hub and a social destination.

"Modern consumers don't just want to shop — they seek diverse scenarios, from coffee breaks and dining experiences to social interaction," said Derek Pang, Hang Lung's senior director of Chinese mainland business operation, during an interview. "We are building a platform where locals, tourists and different community groups can interact — whether cycling from West Lake or exploring the city's newly renovated shops."

Hangzhou has long attracted young professionals and technology-driven industries. Its economic mix of finance, professional services and tech, combined with steady population growth, makes it a compelling retail and office market. "The city's consumption power is immense," Pang said.

According to Cushman & Wakefield's Hangzhou 2025 Commercial Real Estate Annual Report, three malls — Hangzhou MixC, Hangzhou Tower and Yintai in77 — each generated over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) in sales in 2025. This underscores Hangzhou's position as one of China's few cities with multiple high-performing shopping centers.

Westlake 66 occupies the Wulin business area, the city's most prosperous commercial hub, which welcomed 189 million visitors last year. While Hangzhou Tower and the other two department store operators have dominated the high-end luxury segment, Westlake 66 is expected to complement existing projects, offering a fresh, lifestyle-driven alternative.

Hang Lung sees Westlake 66 as a long-term investment. Despite a development cost of 16 billion yuan, the company has focused on operational efficiency from day one. "Opening well is crucial. Only then can long-term development and subsequent expansion be realized," Pang said.

The mall does maintain a luxury presence, though it is secondary to experiential offerings. Several high-end brands have opened on the first floor, with additional openings planned for the latter half of 2026. By 2028, Hang Lung aims to expand the retail footprint, reflecting confidence in the city's consumption potential and Westlake 66's appeal as a lifestyle destination.

At its soft opening in April, Westlake 66 was home to around 250 stores, over a third of which are first-to-market in Hangzhou. Janice Cheung, director of mainland business operation at Hang Lung, said the project targets a new generation of consumers, for whom shopping and dining are experiences defined as much by social interaction as by product consumption.

"The project aims to connect people across different circles, creating more social interaction," Cheung said. The office lobby, located on the fourth floor with direct access to the mall, hotel and park, exemplifies this philosophy. "We are rethinking traditional layouts to foster engagement and a richer experience for office tenants and visitors alike," she added.

To stand out in a crowded market where tenant mixes often overlap, Westlake 66 emphasizes operational capability and innovative concepts.

Lifestyle-oriented retailers such as Ole supermarket debuted its "Ole Lifestyle" concept, while Chinese brands like Truuzen, a leather bag brand from Foshan, Guangdong province, are provided a platform to grow alongside global names.

"We are pleased that many domestic brands are making an impact nowadays. We'd love to offer platforms for them to develop sustainably," said Cheung.

Cheung also highlighted the importance of bridging online discovery with offline engagement. Pop-up stores featuring debut or exclusive products offer a rotating experience for repeat visitors. "Consumers may discover a brand online, but physical stores allow them to fully experience it and build long-term loyalty," she said, citing AmandaX, an apparel brand for women aged 30-50, as an example. AmandaX started on Taobao in 2019 and opened its first offline store in Shanghai last year.

Hang Lung executives expressed optimism about Hangzhou's consumption climate. After a slow start in early 2025, retail sales rebounded sharply in the fourth quarter, returning to double-digit growth. The company forecast that the momentum will continue in 2026, partly supported by Westlake 66's dynamic retail mix and immersive experiences.

"Westlake 66 is designed to be the new pulse of the city," said Weber Lo, CEO of Hang Lung. "By creating a community-centric hub with first-to-market brands and memorable experiences, we are confident to set a new regional benchmark while contributing to the city's broader economic ecosystem."

Looking forward, Hang Lung plans to expand the retail area by 40 percent and triple prime street frontage to over 200 meters through its partnership with Baida Group. The next phase is scheduled for 2028, reinforcing the company's commitment to long-term urban development in Hangzhou.

Leading commercial operators have reported positive signals that the country's consumption market is on an upward trend. According to Swire Properties' first quarter report, retail sales at HKRI Taikoo Hui Shanghai rose 81.5 percent, while Taikoo Li Sanlitun in Beijing grew 56.2 percent. Its commercial estates in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, expanded by 17.6 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively.

Cushman & Wakefield said that Shanghai's retail leasing market remained active in early 2026, with foot traffic and sales surging during the Spring Festival holiday. Lifestyle, food and beverage, and entertainment sectors performed particularly well, signaling a broad-based recovery.





Above: A staff member cuts fresh fish for customers in the Ole Lifestyle supermarket at Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, during the mall's soft opening on April 28.
Left: People shop at Westlake 66 in Hangzhou on April 28.
PHOTOS BY LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

390,200 square meters
floor space of Westlake 66 shopping mall in Hangzhou

Online
Unlock China's Treasures: Shop, Explore, Enjoy.

Luxury outlets drive niche consumption experiences

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**

Luxury outlet retail in China is demonstrating vitality and resilience as the sector capitalizes on the growing demand for cultural, lifestyle and vacation experience-centered shopping.

Among luxury outlet retail operators, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet leads the way.

The flagship project of Italy's RDM Group reported a 6 percent year-on-year increase in sales and a 7 percent rise in visitor traffic in 2025, signaling sustained consumer demand despite broader market headwinds.

On May 10, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin celebrated its 15th anniversary. The shopping complex has contributed to the diversification of the country's outlet market, integrating culture, commerce, tourism, sports, and exhibitions into a unified "micro-vacation" retail experience, said the company.

The shopping complex has established a 180,000-square-meter commercial footprint, hosting more than 200 internationally renowned brands. This includes national outlet exclusive brands such as Roger Vivier, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Peak Performance, as well as North China exclusives like Acne Studios, Mulberry, Mackage and Stone Island.

Jacopo De Vena, managing director of Florentia Village & RDM Asia, said the company has pioneered a "micro-vacation" model, combining authentic Italian architecture, a holiday-style setting, and immersive experiences.

Over the years, FV has adapted to shifting consumer preferences from transactional shopping toward lifestyle-oriented and experiential shopping, said the director. Notably, the sports and outdoor category has emerged as a critical revenue pillar, increasing nearly 20 percent in contribution to the revenue from 2024 to 2025.

Recent upgrades, including expanded VIP lounges, Italian espresso bars and new landscaped pathways, reinforce the shopping complex's signature "La Dolce Vita" atmosphere.

"Consumers today increasingly prefer relaxed, lifestyle-oriented scenarios. We've adapted to the trend and have seen these categories becoming a vital pillar of our revenue structure," De Vena said.

According to Bain & Company's 2025 China Personal Luxury Goods Report, 65 percent of Chinese luxury consumption occurred in the Chinese mainland market in 2025. The report anticipates moderate growth for the Chinese personal luxury market in 2026, with the region poised to remain the cornerstone of global luxury market growth.


A gondolier glides along the canal at Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet in Wuqing, Tianjin, as people stroll across the Venetian-style bridge on May 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Driven by the continued expansion of the middle-income group, a rebound in consumer confidence, and supportive policy measures, further repatriation of luxury spending to the Chinese mainland is expected. However, the degree of growth will remain highly dependent on specific product categories and individual brand performance.

The China Commerce Association for General Merchandise's 2024-2025 China Outlet Industry White Paper estimates that in 2025 there were about 251 outlet projects in operation nationwide, with a total sales scale of about 239 billion yuan ($35.2 billion).

The development of China's outlet industry is undergoing a strategic shift — moving away from sheer scale expansion toward a focus on achieving extreme operational efficiency, said the report.

Against this backdrop, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin, which is located within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei one-hour economic circle, leverages high-speed railway and expressway access to capture intercity passenger flows.

This has allowed the outlet to convert transient visitors into a loyal customer base with high repurchase rates, said the director. Seasonal cultural and experiential programming has further boosted Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin as a dual-city micro-vacation destination, with nearly 80 million visitors to date.

"We broke free from the traditional outlet logic of over-reliance on discounts. By connecting deeply with consumer groups from both Beijing and Tianjin, we converted regional transit passenger flow into a stable consumer group with high stickiness and high repurchase rates," he said.

De Vena added that RDM Group continues to consolidate its market leadership by focusing on six strategic dimensions: scenario creation, high-end merchandising, stock iteration, digital operations, membership deepening, and regional integration.

Through immersive holiday environments, exclusive brand collaborations, and a mature digital ecosystem — encompassing 7.8 million registered members nationwide — the group has built a standardized model capable of replication across all Florentia Village's projects.

Looking ahead, RDM Group is expanding its national footprint with Shanghai third phase and Chongqing second phase, aiming to transform Florentia Village into localized micro-vacation cultural landmarks.

The group emphasizes high brand completeness, cross-border consumption facilitation, and multi-dimensional upgrades to brand matrices, experiential offerings, and commercial value.

Despite increasing competition, national projects achieved an 8 percent year-on-year increase in visitor traffic and 6 percent sales growth in 2025, demonstrating strong resilience and market recognition, said the company.

"Today's outlet is not just a shopping destination; it is a lifestyle and leisure experience," said De Vena. With strategic location, differentiated offerings, and refined operations, Florentia Village continues to be optimistic about the luxury retail and experiential consumption across the country.

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CHINA

Global South teachers to get digital skills training

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

The world's first international action plan specifically designed to improve the digital skills of teachers in developing countries has been unveiled, aiming to systematically assist Global South nations tackle common challenges in the digital transformation of education.

The action plan for enhancing digital literacy of teachers in the Global South was released during a parallel session of the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday.

The plan, initiated by the Africa division of the Institute of Global Teacher Development, reflects China's practical efforts to deepen South-South cooperation and participate in global education governance.

The plan identifies four interlinked structural challenges: insufficient network and device access, a shortage of high-quality and locally adapted multilingual resources, weak foundational teacher skills coupled with a lack of systematic professional development, and fragmented coordination mechanisms. It argues that piecemeal interventions are no longer sufficient.

Key measures include establishing a collaborative mechanism for digital literacy among teachers in the Global South by engaging international organizations, education authorities, universities and enterprises.

The initiative will align with authoritative platforms such as UNESCO's Global Teacher Campus to provide tiered training programs.

The plan also leverages existing overseas platforms such as Confucius Institutes and Luban Workshops to deliver localized support for teachers.

According to the plan, Zhejiang Normal University will lead implementation efforts. Over the next three years, priority flagship projects will be launched, including the establishment of collaboration mechanisms, the joint development of advanced courses and the piloting of lighthouse schools, or model schools.

The lighthouse schools will be established in two or three host Global South countries, with initial design work and resource allocation set to begin in an effort to achieve early tangible outcomes.

Liu Hongwu, director of the College of African Area and Country Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, said the action plan directly addresses key challenges in improving digital literacy among teachers in the Global South during a critical period for the global digital transformation of education.

"The plan addresses four structural challenges widely faced by Global South countries: weak infrastructure, scarce localized resources, lack of training systems and fragmented cooperation mechanisms," Liu said.

He said the plan adopts a systematic four-dimensional framework that creates a closed loop spanning coordination mechanisms, training, demonstration schools and on-the-ground support networks.

"By focusing on teachers' digital literacy, the initiative represents a strategic shift from hardware construction to human capacity building in developing countries," Liu said.

He also acknowledged implementation challenges, including complex coordination among multiple stakeholders and insufficient adaptation of resources for low-bandwidth environments in many Global South countries.

Nevertheless, Liu described the action plan as a pragmatic step that contributes Chinese wisdom and feasible solutions in bridging the global digital divide and promoting equitable education.

Meanwhile, the Hangzhou Initiative on AI and Education, which was also released on Tuesday at the conference, stresses equitable access to the benefits of artificial intelligence and calls for greater use of smart education platforms to share quality resources and intelligent tools to help bridge the global digital divide.

The initiative proposes establishing a global network for teacher training and capacity building, with special attention given to children with special needs.

It also supports UNESCO's leadership role in using digital technologies for post-crisis remedial education, especially for girls and women.

Hidden city reopens



Visitors explore a museum about Beijing's civil air defense history in Qianmen area on Wednesday. Originally built in 1969 and once known as the Beijing underground city, the former civil air defense tunnel complex reopened to the public as a museum on Tuesday, after extensive renovations. HOU YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Smart steps forward



A robotic guide leads a staff member acting as a visually impaired pedestrian during an intelligent robot application competition in Mianyang, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. Designed to assist with safe travel, the robot can identify road conditions and respond to obstacles, sounds and route changes in real time. HAO FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Yunnan to promote lifestyle businesses

Better living conditions, policy support reshape province's tourism economy

By **YAN YUJIE** and **LI YINGQING** in Kunming

Yunnan is positioning itself as a destination not only for tourism, but also for long-term living and entrepreneurship, as the southwestern Chinese province recorded sharp growth in overnight international visitors and long-stay residents in 2025, Governor Wang Yubo said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a briefing on Yunnan's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), Wang said the province is looking to attract more people to "travel, settle and start businesses" in Yunnan, as improving living environments and lifestyle appeal reshape the province's tourism economy.

Yunnan received 8.64 million inbound tourist visits in 2025, up 30 percent year-on-year, according to official data.

Among them, overnight inbound visitors rose 51.8 percent to 4.95 million, outpacing overall growth and signaling rising demand for deeper travel experiences.

The province also saw a surge in long-stay visitors, locally referred to as "sojourners".

More than 5.5 million people chose to live temporarily in Yunnan last year, up 41.4 percent year-on-year, with an average stay of 83 days.

"Many visitors came as tourists but stayed on because they fell in love with the place, becoming new residents of Yunnan," Wang said.

He attributed the trend partly to sweeping improvements in urban and rural living conditions in recent years. According to Wang, all counties, cities and districts in Yunnan now meet national sanitary standards, while all natural villages have reached the top-tier standard for rural living environments.

"With better environments and more beautiful cities and villages, tourists from across China and around the world are flocking to Yunnan," he said.

Earlier this year, Alexandra Solovey, a 46-year-old tourist from the United States, visited Kunming with her husband and daughter. She said the pleasant weather, local cuisine, friendly residents and sense of safety made Yunnan "a fantastic destination".

Among those choosing to stay longer is Zhang Boai, a 35-year-old former flight attendant from Beijing. After traveling across Lijiang, Dali, Kunming, Pu'er and Xishuangbanna in mid-2025, Zhang and her husband relocated to a village in Pu'er with their 3-year-old son later that year.

"I want my son to have a happy childhood close to nature, where he can play freely," Zhang said.

The long-stay trend is also giving rise to new business models.

In Laozhuaqing village in Pu'er, 32-year-old Ying Xixi from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, has launched a digital nomad community, offering shared workspaces for remote workers.

Since opening in late February, the site has already hosted dozens of digital nomads.

"Yunnan has rich resources, diverse ethnic cultures and a great climate, which are all attractive to entrepreneurs like us," Ying said, adding that she hopes for more supportive policies for startup communities and lifestyle-based businesses.

Wang said the province plans to expand policy support, diversify business scenarios and cultivate more sectors suited to lifestyle entrepreneurship. Yunnan also aims to build a number of "cities of entrepreneurship" and "cities of thriving industries" to attract more innovators and business founders.

The growing sojourn economy is already bringing tangible benefits to rural communities.

Yan Di, Party branch secretary of Manhena village in Xishuangbanna, said long-stay tourism has increased significantly since 2024. Last year, the village received more than 10,000 sojourn visitors, many staying for more than 10 days at a time.

The village, home to 109 households and 486 residents, reported an average household income of 80,000 yuan ($11,780) last year, with tourism contributing more than 60 percent.

"Life is steadily getting better," Yan said.

In Lijiang's Yulong county, 57-year-old Fan Hongyan, originally from Xiangxi in Hunan province, opened a guesthouse in September after traveling to more than 50 countries.

"The first time I came here, I was deeply captivated by the scenery and environment," she said. "I knew this was where I wanted to live."

Contact the writers at yanyj@chinadaily.com.cn

Soundbites

Editor's note: *The State Council Information Office held a group interview on Wednesday featuring outstanding teachers to discuss advancing the spirit of educators and accelerating the building of China into a leading country in education.*



On Cuiying Mountain in Lanzhou, we established China's first semi-arid climate change observation station of international standards. I often take my students into the field, trekking across deserts, traversing glaciers and climbing plateaus. They are trained and tested in harsh natural environments, strengthening both their character and resilience. I like the saying along the Taklimakan Desert highway: "There is only a desolate desert, not a desolate life." I often tell my students the same: how could our research be anything but world-class, when we write our papers on the vast land of our motherland and pursue knowledge in the great deserts of the northwest?
Huang Jianping, *an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Lanzhou University in Gansu province*



Labor education is not a decorative add-on, but a source of nourishment and energy for children's all-round development. To help children develop a love for work from an early age, we have designed a curriculum based on the 24 solar terms, encouraging them to engage in hands-on activities in tune with the seasons. Only when teachers remain curious about the world will children long to explore it. I hope our children will feel a spark of excitement at the sight of wild chrysanthemums, and pause to listen when they hear birds singing. Education, at its heart, is about nurturing the ability to perceive happiness and to create it.
Zhang Zhenle, *principal of Fuchun No 7 Primary School Education Group in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province*



I have always worked on the front line of teaching. Together with my institution, I have helped deepen the integration of industry and education, as well as school-enterprise cooperation. I hope to support companies in solving technical challenges while personally guiding students in developing practical skills. Watching them grow from novices to skilled professionals, then step out of campus and into major aviation enterprises, contributing to China's domestically developed aircraft and other critical national projects, gives me a deep sense of fulfillment.
Zhou Shuqiang, *professor at Chengdu Aeronautic Polytechnic University*



The essence of nurturing both intellect and character lies in "seeing every individual". At our school, each class is assigned a psychological counselor, and we have launched a smart mental health platform to support the well-being of both students and teachers. We focus not only on students' academic progress, but also on their emotional needs and individual differences. At the same time, we recognize the dedication of every teacher, providing practical support to help address real challenges, so that everyone on campus is seen and respected.
Xie Wei, *principal of Yinchuan No 15 Middle School, Ningxia Hui autonomous region*



We support teachers in defining clear development goals based on their individual circumstances, whether they are newly recruited or experienced backbone teachers. Taking into account teachers' years of experience and professional strengths, we design stage-specific learning content and practical opportunities, enabling them to grow steadily and continuously. We aim to ignite teachers' inner drive, helping them feel the nobility of the profession and sustain their intrinsic passion, while also strengthening their professional competence. There is only one character's difference between a "profession" and a "vocation", but it transforms teachers' mindset, energizes the entire team, and eventually benefits tens of thousands of children.
An Huixia, *principal of Xinghua Preschool Education Group in Taiyuan, Shanxi province*

ZHAO YIMENG

HK's emissions detector to aid climate research from Tiangong

By **WU KUNLING** in Hong Kong
amberwu@chinadailyhk.com

The world's first lightweight, high-resolution, high-precision carbon dioxide and methane point-source detector, developed by Hong Kong scientists, has arrived at the Tiangong, making it the city's first scientific payload aboard the orbiting national space station.

The project, hailed as proof of Hong Kong's ability to support the nation's space development and carbon neutrality drive, is able to detect over 99 percent of CO2 emissions from the nation's coal-burning power plants and CH4 emissions from its coal mines, providing precise and reliable data for policymakers in China and around the world, said Su Hui, co-leader of the project and chair professor of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, on Wednesday.

The Hong Kong-made payload, the Multi-Spectral Imaging Carbon Observatory, nicknamed "eye for space", arrived at Tiangong at 1:11 pm on Monday aboard the Tianzhou-10 cargo craft. It was part of a consignment of essential deliveries such as artificial human embryos and ultra-thin solar cells, and supplies including an extravehicular spacesuit.

The MUSICO will participate in China's first Earth observation project under its human spaceflight program.

Weighing less than 80 kilograms and smaller than a domestic washing machine, the payload is capable of accurately measuring CO2 and CH4 — two major greenhouse gases — from space, with extra-high spectral resolution and 100-meter spatial resolution, said the research team.

By analyzing intensity changes in sunlight over specific spectral bands as it passes through the atmosphere and reflects off the Earth's surface, the payload identifies gas-specific absorption features to determine gas concentrations and pinpoint individual emission sources, enabling effective monitoring of key facilities such as power plants and landfills.

Su said the detector's observation range covers latitudes from 42 degrees south to 42 degrees north — encompassing most of the world's densely populated and industrially active regions. The data it collects will be shared with government departments and research institutions in China and abroad under the nation's data management policies.

She added that recipients include the nation's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and the United Nations Environment Programme which will add it to an open global dataset for researchers and authorities worldwide.

Zhang Limin, another co-lead of the project and head of HKUST's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, said that while the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has participated in many of the nation's space projects in the past, this payload is the first mission led by the SAR — a milestone.

He highlighted that the project's results will also provide a scientific basis for cross-regional climate research and emissions reduction efforts in economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, contributing to the global response to climate change.

HKUST President Nancy Ip Yuk-yu said the project proves that Hong Kong's research capabilities can make substantial contributions to the nation's highest-level aerospace platforms.

It also supports the nation's dual-carbon goals and provides scientific backing for the Beautiful China Initiative and global climate governance, Ip said.

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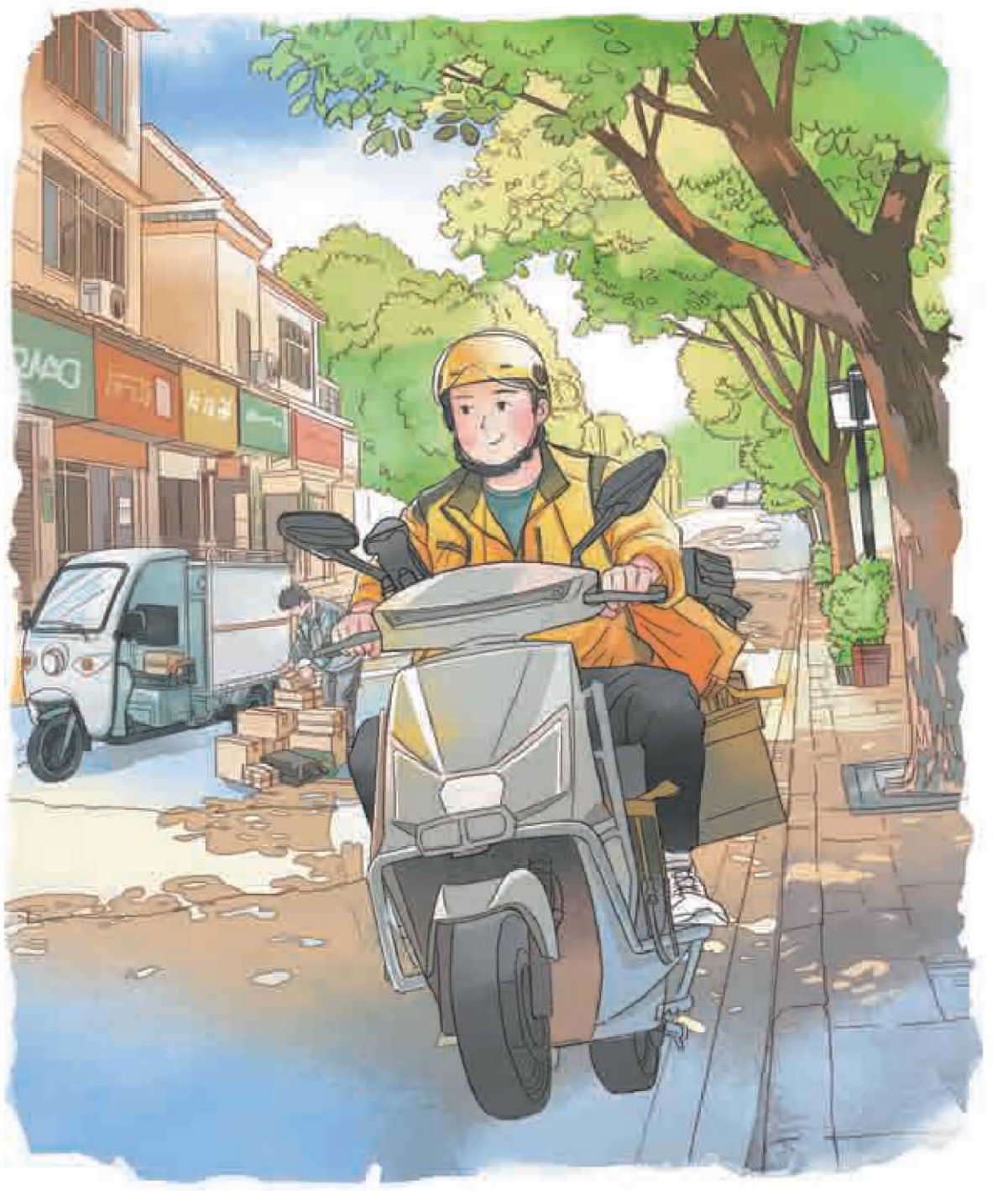
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POLICY REVIEW

Guideline boosts gig worker protections

Government policy provides growing oversight over new employment types

By JI HAISHENG
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

During campus breaks, Xiao Tang, a university student from Hebei province, takes to Beijing's streets as a ride-hailing driver. A driving enthusiast, he has turned his time off campus into a source of income and a tangible sense of autonomy. "I enjoy it. It gives me control over my time," he said.

His experience is a snapshot of a much larger trend. "Young people across China are increasingly turning to digital platforms for work, forming the backbone of the country's expanding 'new forms of employment,'" said Zeng Yanbo, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Sociology.

"New forms of employment" are distinct from traditional full-time work, referring to jobs where tasks are matched, assigned, managed and compensated via internet platforms, such as online service provider Meituan, ride-hailing platform Didi and short-video app Douyin.

More than 70 percent of such workers are aged between 18 and 35, according to Zeng. "Young people are drawn to these jobs mainly for the low entry barriers, the quick settlement of income, and the freedom to set their own schedules," she said.

As this workforce continues to grow, the country has introduced a series of policy measures designed to safeguard these workers' rights, improve services and steer the high-quality development of the sector.

In April, the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a set of policy measures on strengthening service and management for new employment groups. Experts said that this marks the first central-level policy framework dedicated exclusively to platform-based workers.

They added that it signals a decisive shift for China's digital economy — from a phase of rapid expansion to a new stage of standardized development that balances innovation with labor dignity and security.

According to a survey on China's workforce in 2023, the country has approximately 84 million workers engaged in new forms of employment, accounting for 21 percent of its total workforce. Projections indicate the figure may surpass 100 million this year.

"The new employment group is an important component of China's workforce and an indispensable force for socioeconomic development. It has now become a crucial pillar of the job market," said Zhang Dandan, a professor of economics and vice-dean at Peking University's National School of Development.

Li Yan, 37, from Yuncheng in Shanxi province, has spent a decade delivering food in Beijing. For most of those years, he worked as a freelance courier on major platforms, appreciating the flexible hours but lacking any form of employment security.

A pivotal shift came in March of last year, when he joined e-commerce company JD as a full-time delivery rider.

Despite it currently being a low season for orders, Li said he still earns around 8,000 yuan ($1,180) per month. Beyond the pay, a transformative benefit has been his enrollment in a social security program, with JD covering the employer's mandatory contribution and subsidizing employees' personal contributions. For Li, this security has become a tangible foundation for his future. He said he is committed to building a long-term career with the company, with plans to stay until retirement.

While individual stories highlight the search for security, the sector's overall vitality remains robust. A recent report by Jinan University's Institute for Economic and Social Research in Guangdong province and recruitment portal Zhaopin showed job postings in new forms of employment rose 15.1 percent year-on-year in 2025, while job seekers rose 11 percent year-on-year, with over 80 percent of positions offering monthly salaries between 8,001 yuan and 15,000 yuan.

For years, the explosive growth of platform jobs, hailed for creating employment, outpaced the development of corresponding safeguards. "The core challenge lies in the mismatch between a new, flexible employment model and a social protection system designed for traditional, stable jobs," Zhang said.

The newly issued policy document provides a comprehensive, two-phase blueprint to bridge this gap. The primary goal is to standardize labor practices and ensure robust rights protection by 2027, followed by the establishment of a sound service and management system within the next three to five years.

It has urged internet platforms and express delivery companies to set reasonable wages for workers based on work tasks and labor intensity, and to ensure full and timely payment. Another pillar of the reform is bringing transparency and accountability to the algorithms that govern such work. Platforms are now required to disclose rules for order assignment, pricing, assessment and penalties, according to the document.

While the policy direction is clear, experts caution that its implementation faces deep-seated economic challenges. Zhang identified income as the primary, underlying concern. "For riders, the core issue is earnings from each delivery," she said.

Citing a widespread belief that any new cost levied on platforms — for social insurance subsidies or safety incentives — will be passed down to workers, Zhang said, "Real, sustainable security for workers must be built on a foundation of adequate earnings in the first place."

Alongside safeguards, she stressed that it is essential to introduce measures that curb cutthroat competition and strictly prevent the infringement of workers' rights and interests.

Yin Yu, a senior partner at Guangdong-based Guanghe Law Firm, urged lawmakers to expedite dedicated legislation to protect the rights of workers in new employment forms.

She told Legal Daily that the next critical step is to translate the proven measures outlined in the policy document to binding legal statutes. This legislation, she said, should systematically define the nature of employment relationships, the rights and obligations of all parties, liability divisions, and regulatory oversight responsibilities, thereby solidifying the institutional safeguards for this workforce.

Zeng emphasized the urgency of establishing comprehensive skill standards and structured promotion pathways for delivery riders and similar professions. She advocated benchmarking against the technical worker grading system, a strategic move aimed at elevating these roles from temporary positions to viable lifelong careers.

This transformation, she noted, is essential for providing workers with long-term growth opportunities and fundamentally reshaping the perception and stability of platform-based employment.

Delivery platform reforms prioritize riders' safety over speed

By JI HAISHENG

The removal of late-delivery penalties in early 2026 has marked a turning point for China's gig economy, signaling a shift from speed-first algorithms to worker safety.

For veteran riders like Li Xincang, 39, who has navigated Beijing's streets for over a decade, the shift represents the professionalization of a sector once defined by high-risk labor and social insecurity.

When Li, a native of Puyang in Central China's Henan province, arrived in the capital over two decades ago, he started working on construction sites like many other rural migrants.

"The wages were often delayed, and there were no social security benefits at all," he said.

Seeking a more predictable income, he switched to food delivery in 2014 and has worked for consumer services platform Meituan for almost nine years.

Today, the veteran leads a team of over 110 riders and earns more than 10,000 yuan ($1,470) a month. Earnings are deposited quickly, he said, explaining that part-time riders get paid the next day, while full-time team members receive weekly wages.

"Delivery work won't make you rich, but it can support a family steadily," Li said. The reliable and timely income allowed him to pay off debts of over 100,000 yuan and build a decent house back in his hometown.

Beyond the paycheck, Li cherishes the flexibility. "I can choose to work mornings, evenings, or nights, and manage my own schedule. I can even take a moment to relax if I need, or scroll through my phone during a break," he said. "This is something you hardly get on a factory floor or a construction site."

Li said that the most crucial improvement he has witnessed is the reform of the delivery algorithm, the system that organizes his daily work.

"In the past, we could get up to 12 orders at a time, with very tight deadlines. We had to rush and sometimes even risk traffic violations," he said. Now, influenced by the government and stakeholders, the system limits trips to six or seven orders with more reasonable time windows. "The algorithm now puts safety before speed," he added.

The platform reinforces this by issuing warnings or short-term account restrictions for repeated traffic violations. A pivotal relief came in early 2026 when penalties for late deliveries were removed.

"Riders no longer feel forced to risk their lives on the road," Li said. "This shift has significantly reduced the danger of accidents caused by overwork or rushed deliveries."

This growing sense of security extends from the daily grind to long-term planning. A key milestone was the introduction of a pension subsidy program late last year. Li and his teammates are now covered by the program that subsidizes their participation in basic pension insurance for gig workers.

"Compared with construction work that offers no proper social security, this job gives us a greater sense of security," Li said. "This pension scheme will protect us after we retire. Having it makes my family feel truly at ease."

Support on the ground has also been upgraded. Li praised the launch of hubs dedicated to delivery riders, which offer 24/7 shelter, charging ports and seasonal supplies. However, he is critical of commercial outlets that hang similar signs for show without providing real service and suggests resources should be directed toward stations that genuinely help workers.

For Li, the past decade traces a clear path — from chasing immediate wages to building a stable, secure life with a future to look forward to. He acknowledged his own story as part of a broader shift where the nation's policy direction and corporate initiatives are converging to provide millions with not just an income, but a growing sense of dignity.

Li said he may continue riding for a few more years, or he might return to his hometown to promote local farm produce online, leveraging a following he has built on social media.

He added that his plans remain flexible, while his next steps will ultimately depend on his family's needs.

Policy Digest

Roadmap to cultivate global textile leaders

China will cultivate no fewer than 25 leading textile and apparel brands by 2028 as part of efforts to significantly enhance the competitiveness and market influence of the sector, according to an action plan issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and four other departments that was recently publicized.

The action plan for the cultivation of excellence in textile and apparel brands (2026-28) sets out six key tasks, including the categorized cultivation of leading brands across supply chains, industrial ecosystems and consumer markets. Enterprises will be guided to focus on specialized market segments and consumer scenarios to create a group of supply-chain brands and consumer-facing brands.

The plan calls for stronger development of smart textiles, including smart wearables, intelligent home textiles, and products related to healthcare and medical applications.

To promote digital and intelligent upgrading, the plan encourages the release of innovative application scenarios for "AI plus textiles" across the entire industrial chain. It also supports the use of human-computer interaction and virtual interaction to better understand personalized consumer demand, while improving the technological level and wider application of virtual fitting, intelligent outfit recommendations and virtual anchors.

Campaign to uplift rural culture, health services

The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and 12 other departments recently issued a notice launching the 2026 campaign to bring culture, science and health services to the countryside, aiming to deliver more high-quality resources directly to rural communities.

Under the campaign, cultural and artistic services will be brought to rural areas by mobilizing literary and artistic teams to provide cultural services. Support will also be given to mass cultural and sports activities.

Legal services will be strengthened through regular rural-themed public legal education activities, while agricultural technology services will focus on the needs of rural industrial development.

The campaign will expand science outreach in rural communities through innovative science popularization demonstration activities and high-quality public science content.

Medical resources will be sent to rural communities via free clinic weeks, visits by renowned doctors to grassroots areas, and stationed or mobile medical services at township and village levels, and public welfare services will also be expanded.

Tap water coverage in countryside hits 96%

China's rural tap water coverage reached 96 percent by the end of 2025, the Ministry of Water Resources said on Tuesday.

By the end of last year, large-scale water supply projects covered 71 percent of the rural population, while 72 percent of counties had adopted unified county-level management for rural water supply, the ministry told a press conference.

China had nearly 3.82 million rural water supply projects by the end of 2025, forming a supply network covering 850 million rural residents. The number of people relying mainly on water cellars and water storage tanks for water supply had dropped by 79 percent by the end of last year from the level at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), areas lifted out of poverty completed 914.9 billion yuan ($133.71 billion) in water conservancy investment, including 145.5 billion yuan in key counties.

China aims to raise rural tap water coverage to 97 percent by the end of 2026, with large-scale water supply projects covering 73 percent of the rural population, according to the ministry. By 2030, the country aims to lift rural tap water coverage to 98 percent.

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CULTURE



Pearls of perspective

Growing up in China, award-winning novelist worked throughout her life to strengthen cross-cultural understanding, **Yang Yang** reports.

In the history of Sino-US exchanges, Nobel Prize-winner Pearl S Buck, a writer from the United States also known as Sai Zhenzhu, stands prominently as "the most influential Westerner to write about China since the 13th century's Marco Polo", as described by late US historian James C Thomson Jr.

Buck's true significance lies in her approach to cross-cultural understanding, says Guo Yingjian, a specially appointed professor at Renmin University of China, one of the earliest Chinese scholars to research Buck.

"She shows us that effective cultural exchange doesn't start with labels, ideological judgments, or demonization. Instead, it begins with understanding people's lives: their suffering, dignity, and shared emotions," he says.

Through reading her popular and sympathetic novels, particularly *The Good Earth*, Americans' perceptions of China changed significantly in the 1930s and 40s.

"The majority of Chinese were seen for the first time in literature as honest, kindhearted, frugal-living, hard-working, deity-fearing farmers who are much the same as American farmers," wrote Chinese scholar Liao Kang in 1997.

Buck's empathy went beyond pity, reflecting an understanding of others' circumstances, says Guo.

She captured both the hardships and resilience of Chinese farmers, writing about not only poverty but also dignity, not only backwardness but also human complexity, he says. Consequently, the China she depicted, though not a full picture, was warm, textured, and humane, he adds.

One important reason Buck was able to represent Chinese characters with empathy and compassion lies in the fact that "she did not view China as a foreign tourist on a brief visit; rather, she lived and grew up in China, and spent a long time sharing the same world with ordinary Chinese people," says Guo.

Her writing about China did not stem from an abstract "Oriental imagination", but from everyday life, land ethics, family relationships, and basic human emotions, he notes.

A daughter of Southern Presbyterian missionaries, Buck left her hometown of Hillsboro, West Virginia, for China in 1892, when she was about four months old. In 1896, her family moved from Huai'an to Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, where they lived for the next 18 years.

Unlike other missionaries, Buck's parents, Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, chose to live among Chinese people to fully immerse themselves in local culture rather than in isolated Westernized compounds.

Life in Zhenjiang greatly influenced Buck and her writing, especially the daily interactions with her nanny and tutor, says Lu Zhangping, director of the Zhenjiang Pearl S Buck Research Association.

In Zhenjiang, a local Chinese woman surnamed Wang cared for Buck for 18 years. Wang, kind and diligent, often cooked her delicious meals and snacks. Their relationship went far beyond that of servant and master. Wang treated her like her own child. Whenever Buck was punished by her mother for disobedience, Wang would quietly help her with the chores and offer guidance. From a young age, Buck had developed a deep respect and admiration for Chinese women.

Wang often told Buck tales about the famine during her own childhood, her family, and bandits; martial arts stories about standing up to the powerful; fighting injustice; and Chinese classics set in Zhenjiang, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Legend of the White Snake* and *The Water Margin* (or Outlaws of the Marsh).

Her parents hired a traditional scholar, 50-year-old Mr Kung, to teach Buck classical Chinese literature and thought. Mr Kung, originally from Beijing, moved to Zhenjiang after his house was burned down by German soldiers.

Every afternoon at 2 pm, Mr Kung arrived at Buck's home for two-hour lessons. He taught her about Confucius, Bodhisattva, Chinese history, classical literature, life maxims, and local customs and traditions. When answering her questions, he went beyond mere book knowledge, emphasizing the connection between the "source" and the "flow" that links the past, present and future. He also encouraged young Buck to study Chinese classical novels and taught her about the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" that was stored in Zhenjiang's Wenzong Ge, an ancient library.

For 10 years, through reading classical texts and practicing calligraphy, She not only became well-versed in traditional Chinese classics and familiar with Chinese history, culture and geography, but also developed a beautiful regular-script style of writing, spoke fluent Mandarin, and even learned to carve seals. In Zhenjiang, she also witnessed the miserable lives of victims of the 1905 Yangtze River flood, which provided first-hand material for *The Good Earth*.

In 1910, Pearl Buck returned to the United States to attend Randolph-Macon Woman's College and, shortly after graduating in 1914, returned to China. She taught English in middle schools in Zhenjiang for two years and, after marrying John Lossing Buck in 1917, the couple went north to live in the countryside of Suzhou, Anhui province, to research life and agriculture in rural areas.







Top: Pearl S Buck (right) at a United China Relief fundraising event in the US in 1941. She played an active role in encouraging and organizing fundraising efforts in the US. **Middle left:** Buck speaking at the National Press Club in Washington. **Middle right:** A photo taken on August 17, 2025, in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, shows a Western-style building, which is now home to the Pearl S Buck Memorial House. **Above:** *The Patriot*, released in New York in 1939, was the first novel Pearl S Buck published after receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1938. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"During her four to five years in Suzhou, Pearl Buck learned about the rural areas and farmers in China more profoundly," Lu says.

From 1919 to 1934, the Bucks both taught at the University of Nanking. In the house located at No 3 Pingcang Alley, now in the Gulou Campus of Nanjing University, she completed her first novels, including *East Wind, West Wind* (1930), *The Good Earth* (1931), *Sons* (1933), and *The Mother* (1933), as well as a translation.

In 1933, Buck published the first English translation of *The Water Margin*, one of Chinese literature's Four Great Classic Novels of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), giving it the title *All Men Are Brothers*, a line she learned from the Confucian classic *The Analects*.

In 1938, when Buck received the Nobel Prize in literature, she gave a lecture, *The Chinese Novel*, in which she said, "My earliest knowledge of story, of how to tell and write stories, came to me in China". She also mentioned the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" she learned from Mr Kung.

The Good Earth, featuring a poor Chinese farmer's family caught in the tides of history, became an instant best-seller in the US and was translated into more than 30 languages. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. In 1937, a film adaptation was produced and won an Oscar for Best Actress the following year.

In 1934, with much reluctance, Pearl Buck left China, but her connection with the Chinese people was never severed.

Since the 1920s, she had been writing articles for US magazines, including The Atlantic, Asia, The Chinese Recorder, and The Nation, on Chinese farmer's life, culture, the shifting roles of women, and China's social dynamics.

In the United States, Buck fully committed herself to humanitarian and cultural endeavors related to China.

In 1941, she became president of Asia magazine to promote modern Chinese literature, aiming to create vibrant, multidimensional Chinese characters that challenged Western stereotypes.

The same year, the East and West Association was established, and as the president, Buck utilized lectures, publications, broadcasts, and translations to spread Chinese culture and provide crucial international support for wartime China.

In 1943, Buck joined the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion as a key spokesperson, publicly criticizing the exclusion laws. Her efforts contributed to the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act later that year.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Buck steadfastly supported China's mission. Since the September 18th Incident in 1931, she had openly condemned Japanese militarism and consistently informed the American public about the realities of the war in China.

To aid China, she initiated the Book of Hope fundraising campaign in 1940 and subsequently led the China Emergency Relief Committee and the United China Relief agency, organizing large-scale fundraising efforts to provide medical supplies, build hospitals, and aid civilians and war orphans.

Throughout the war, she frequently used media platforms to voice her support. In 1938, she reviewed the book *Red Star Over China*, predicting China's revolutionary victory and in another article published later that year she praised Chinese guerrilla tactics. In 1942, she published the novel *Dragon Seed*, set against the backdrop of the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, during which 300,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed, making it one of the most horrific atrocities of World War II.

In 1938, in the Banquet Speech of the Nobel Prize, Buck said: "I have never admired China more than I do now, when I see her uniting as she has never before, against the enemy who threatens her freedom. With this determination for freedom, which is in so profound a sense the essential quality in her nature, I know that she is unconquerable."

In 1945, she witnessed Japan's surrender to the Allies, marking the end of the war. In 1973, Buck died in Danby, Vermont, at 80. According to her will, her tombstone at Green Hills Farm in Pennsylvania bears no English name, no birth or death dates, and no epitaph — only three Chinese characters in seal script, handwritten by Buck herself: *Sai Zhen Zhu*, her Chinese name.

In the Statement on the Death of Pearl S Buck in 1973, former US president Richard Nixon said: "In life, Pearl Buck was a human bridge between the civilization of the East and West."

Today, China is quite different from the one depicted in Buck's works. Characterized with modernity, urbanization, globalization, and digitalization, modern China is a far cry from the one focused on land, villages, and family ethics in *The Good Earth*, Guo, the professor, says.

"If we still read Buck solely as a way to understand China's reality, we're missing the point," Guo says.

"In today's context of challenging Sino-US relations, her significance is in her reminder that even if relations between countries are tense, the possibility for understanding between individuals should remain," Guo says, adding, "It is an agreement we reached after discussing the significance of Pearl Buck with the Ministry of Education's China Center for International People-to-People Exchange in current cultural exchanges.

"No matter how dominant political narratives become, they cannot completely obscure the reality of ordinary people's lives. While the China she wrote about is in the past, the method she represents — understanding people through their humanity — is still relevant today," he stresses.

Contact the writer at yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

A well-versed exchange between Chinese and Arab writers

GUANGZHOU — Young poets, writers and scholars from China and Arab countries have gathered in South China's Guangzhou, Guangdong province, for a poetry festival aimed at deepening literary dialogue and people-to-people exchanges.

A China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival began over the weekend in the southern metropolis, drawing more than 40 young poets, Sinologists and writers from 13 Arab countries, including Morocco, Syria and Egypt, alongside more than 40 young Chinese poets.

The event will run through Sunday. In the coming days, Chinese and Arab poets will take part in a series of cultural exchange activities in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, both in Guangdong province, and Beijing, including poetry readings, academic dialogues, poetry seminars, and field visits.





The opening ceremony of China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on May 9. PHOTOS BY LU HANXIN / XINHUA

"Though separated by thousands of miles and different languages, the two great poetic traditions of China and the Arab world have become both the root and soul of their civilizations, with condensed language, profound wisdom, and sincere emotion," says Zhang Hongsen, chairman of the China Writers Association.

Zhang says he hopes young poets from both sides will draw inspiration from one another while staying rooted in their own cultures, allowing poetry to flourish through exchanges between tradition and modernity, and the local and the global.

For Egyptian poet Yahia Mohamed Wagdy Lotfy Omar, poetry can travel across languages and borders.

"When I write a line of poetry, a friend on the other side of the world who speaks a different language can still be moved by it and understand it. That is poetry," he says, adding that translation serves as an important bridge, and such gatherings can help poets break through their own limitations.

Launched by the China Writers Association in 2024, the International Youth Poetry Festival has previously held special sessions for BRICS countries and China-Latin America exchanges.

Organizers say the platform is growing into an international venue for young writers to promote literary dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations.

XINHUA

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LIFE



Blending tea culture with travel

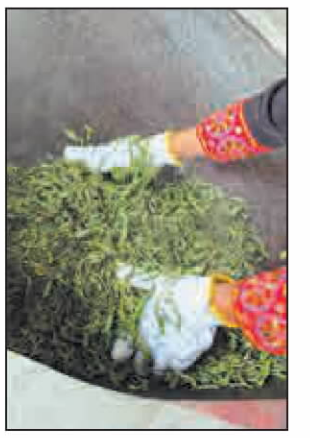
Enthusiast-turned-entrepreneur shares his appreciation for the drink along with his sourcing adventures, report **Zheng Zheng** and **Wu Wanzhen** in Shanghai.

When Derek Poskin first arrived in the historic canal city of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, in 2016, he was tracing a poem by Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai and developing a growing appreciation for Chinese tea culture. Nearly a decade later, the American, born in 1988, has become a tea entrepreneur, sourcing premium leaves across China and selling them to customers worldwide.

"Coffee is for work. Tea, though, is for life. I've always been passionate about Chinese tea," Poskin says from Empty Cup, his renovated tea house nestled in Yangzhou's old quarter, where he introduces visitors from around the world to China's tea traditions.

"I started drinking and buying more, and eventually turned my house into a warehouse. I had to share it somehow, and that's how the business began."





From passion to business

Poskin launched his tea venture in 2018 as a side project, aiming to connect Western tea enthusiasts with the traditions behind it. However, the early years were challenging.

"The first three or four years were really slow," he admits, recalling how only family members purchased his products initially. "I still remember the first time I got an order from somebody I didn't know. I was like, 'Oh my gosh'. That was the moment I knew I was making it. It's been a long, long process."

Navigating China's tea landscape is no simple feat. The country produces thousands of varieties across six main categories — green, white, yellow, oolong, black, and dark teas like Pu'er.

Rather than working through middlemen, Poskin travels directly to tea-growing regions across China, from the ancient forests of Yunnan province in the southwest to the oolong gardens of Fujian province along the eastern coast.

"One of the reasons I came to China was to live the tea culture. The best way to do that is to go where the tea is made," he explains. "Before coming to China, I had been drinking tea for a long time but had never actually seen a tea plant. Now I've hiked through some of the country's most remote tea mountains."

Connective expeditions

One of Poskin's most memorable expeditions took him to Guafengzhai, a remote village of the Yao ethnic group in Yunnan's Yiwu town, about two kilometers from the border with Laos. Renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea, the village had long been a bucket list destination for the entrepreneur.

The journey began with a leap of faith — connecting through social media with a young, local farmer named Zhao Xiaoyun. "I had this prearranged date with a person I'd never met, in a town I'd never been to, to venture to the borders of China," Poskin recalls. "But as soon as I met her, I knew we were on the same page. We both spoke the language of tea."

The four-day expedition immersed him in every aspect of tea production. Joining Zhao, her mother, sister, and friends deep in the tea forests, he picked leaves, laid them out to sun-dry, and helped with the roasting.

"We've hosted foreign tea merchants who have visited our plantation for business before, but Derek stands out for his exceptional knowledge of tea," says Zhao. "When we taught him the leaf fixation process, a critical step that halts oxidation and preserves flavor, he learned it immediately."

The primeval forests, with tea trees hundreds of years old growing wild among other vegetation, left an enduring impression. "Walking through those ancient groves felt like stepping into another world," Poskin describes. "The farmers would point out edible herbs along the way, letting me taste spicy leaves that would numb my mouth like Sichuan peppercorns.

"That's one of the most magical aspects — experiencing the land with the people who live on it," he adds.

Pieces of a puzzle

Poskin's dedication to understanding tea goes beyond sourcing trips. He spent a year in Chaozhou, Guangdong province, studying the art of making clay teapots used for *gongfu cha* (tea with skill). This method uses small pots and cups to bring out complex flavors through multiple short infusions.

He has participated in some local customs and festivals during his trips, often as the only foreigner. "One time, around Qingming Festival, I was invited to join a family's tomb-sweeping ritual," he recounts. "We killed chickens, burned incense and paper money, and set out meals for the ancestors. It was incredible to be part of that living tea culture."

The tea is just the surface, he emphasizes. "When I experience the world through the eyes of the people in the mountains, I realize how deep tea culture really is. The leaves themselves are just a piece of the puzzle."

Through his travels across different provinces, Poskin's understanding of the drink itself has shifted from a search for correctness to an appreciation for diversity.

"I came thinking there was one correct way to drink tea," he explains. "But I've learned that Chinese tea culture is incredibly fluid and varies by region." For example, people might drink green tea straight from a glass jar in Yangzhou, while in Chaozhou, elaborate *gongfu cha* sets are the norm.

"Chinese tea culture is fluid, more Taoist," he says. "Every place has its own style, and any way you drink tea is the right way. I find that very welcoming and liberating."

Bridging East and West

These experiences have become central to his business model. Poskin documents his sourcing journeys through videos and photographs, sharing them with customers to create transparency and a connection between consumers and producers.

His content creation extends to a podcast called Tea Soup, a YouTube channel, and an active social media presence through which he has built a following of enthusiasts eager to learn about authentic Chinese tea culture.

Most of his customers are based in the United States, with significant sales to Germany and other EU countries. To introduce premium flavors to a wider audience, he utilizes blending techniques that maintain high quality while remaining affordable.

"I buy some really good tea and blend it with a less expensive tea that complements it, so people can try something high-quality at an affordable price," he explains. For each product, he creates detailed tasting notes, origin information, and brewing instructions.

Unlike many e-commerce businesses, Poskin operates exclusively through his own website, maintaining full control over the customer experience — from freshly coined tea names to packaging designs. "It's something I have complete control of. For me, this is a creative expression," he says.

Looking ahead, Poskin envisions his business evolving into a social enterprise that gives back to farming communities. His new teahouse project in Yangzhou aims to create a physical space where people can experience Chinese tea culture firsthand.

"The business is doing well. My partner and I are interested in making it a social enterprise — giving back to the farmers and doing something positive," he reflects. "I don't need to make endless money. I'd rather cap it and use the excess for good.

"From the start, this has been a passion project," he emphasizes. "I want a deeper understanding of Chinese tea, to source better tea, and to awaken more people to Chinese tea culture."

Reflecting on a decade in China, Poskin offers fellow entrepreneurs a perspective of patience. "China is a world of opportunities. There are so many people who can help you. But don't rush it," he notes. "Great things take years, and then they happen all at once."



Clockwise from top: Derek Poskin on the tea mountain in Guafengzhai, which is located on the southwest border of Yunnan province and is renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea;
The leaf fixation process;
Poskin shows fresh and sun-dried tea leaves;
Poskin and Zhao rolling tea leaves. PHOTOS BY ZHENG ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Contact the writers at zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Salon and music strengthen Sino-New Zealand friendship

WELLINGTON — Featuring a concert by the Amber Quartet, the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in late April integrated Chinese tea culture with classical Western music in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city.

Organized by the China Cultural Center in Auckland, the event opened with tea tasting, traditional tea preparation, tea appreciation, and storytelling about tea culture, creating an elegant, harmonious atmosphere. Participants were invited to make a personalized cup of tea using an ancient Chinese style in which tea powder is applied to "draw" pictures on the tea's foam.

The Amber Quartet was founded in 2005 and has become an internationally influential string quartet in China. During the event, Debussy's *String Quartet* and works featuring the ethnic cultures of both countries were performed. "They were truly amazing," Sharon Ann from the audience says, speaking of the performers' superb skills.

Chen Shijie, Chinese consul general in Auckland, says that the event uses music as a bridge and tea as a bond to convey the friendship of the Chinese people, helping deepen mutual understanding and relations between the people of China and New Zealand, and strengthening the public foundation of bilateral relations.

Bob Harvey, former mayor of Waitakere, says he values the historical ties and current cooperation with China. "This night is cemented with tea for harmony and peace. It is such a special moment."





Left: A participant experiences traditional Chinese tea culture during the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in Auckland, New Zealand, in April. **Right:** Auckland people enjoy traditional Chinese tea culture at the event organized by the city's China Cultural Center.
PHOTOS BY WU JIAXIANG / XINHUA

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LIFE

An island's women on wheels

On remote Qushan in Zhejiang province, a team of female delivery drivers is reshaping traditional roles, balancing motherhood and work while forging independence and solidarity, **Chen Nan** reports.

Part of the Zhoushan Islands in China's Zhejiang province, hundreds of kilometers from the mainland, lies Qushan Island, home to fewer than 100,000 residents.

Life here revolves around a main road, which is a narrow stretch lined with schools, a clinic, a handful of shops, four bubble-tea cafes, and a lone coffeehouse. This modest cluster forms the island's "central business district". Yet, in the past year, it has become the stage for an extraordinary cast of women.

They are mothers averaging 40 years of age who have traded the predictable rhythms of domestic life for the hum of electric scooters and the uniform of the island's delivery service. Day after day, clad in orange and black, they navigate winding lanes and stair-stepped alleyways, threading the island together one takeout order at a time.

Once tied to roles defined by family and circumstance, such as wives awaiting fishermen at sea, and mothers trapped in part-time work, they now claim a new agency in these small, daily movements, quietly "rebuilding themselves" with every delivery.

From February to March this year, renowned Chinese photographer Xie Hailong, whose work has chronicled ordinary lives for 35 years, visited Qushan, drawn by curiosity.

"On an island surrounded by wind and sea, I wanted to see how these women could seize their own lives," he says. More than 10 of his photographs are being displayed in an exhibition titled *Seeing: Cities and Riders*, running from April 17 to the coming Sunday at public locations across 12 cities nationwide, capturing these women, who root themselves in a life defined not by circumstance, but by choice, against the rhythm of waves and wind.

Xie, 75, is known for a photo that he took in 1991, telling the story of Su Mingjuan, then 8 years old, with great sparkling eyes and a pencil in hand, in rural Jinzhai county, Anhui province. The photo became a household image after it was used as a poster for Project Hope, which was launched by the China Youth Development Foundation in 1989 and is dedicated to helping underprivileged children get an education.

Xie was inspired by a video online that he watched in 2025, featuring this group of women whose optimism, smiles and authenticity shone through every frame.

"I was captivated by their energy and found myself curious about this unique team — how, in such an isolated place, surrounded only by wind and sea, could they courageously choose their path, work tirelessly, and hold tightly to the life they wanted to live," the photographer says.

The first time he saw them in person, their vibe instantly drew him in. They were a diverse group of women, aged between 30 and 50, all dressed in bright orange uniforms. They gathered at the "CBD" of the island and chatted and laughed together.

"Their electric bikes were parked nearby, and they were like a burst of color against the backdrop of the island. When an order came in, one of them would zip off to deliver it, only to return afterward and join the group once again," says Xie.

During the days when their husbands were out at sea, these women became each other's family, supporting one another through thick and thin. When one of them had fewer orders, the others would step in and share theirs. If a newcomer was unfamiliar with the island's streets, the experienced riders would patiently guide her. Between orders, they would pull out little mirrors and lipsticks to touch up their makeup, reminding each other that, even in their uniforms, they never forgot the importance of feeling beautiful.

"It is a life that is both modest and deeply connected, where community comes first, and every little act of kindness carries weight. These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy," the photographer says.

Among these women is Chen Lirong, born in 1997 and the youngest and fastest of Qushan's female riders. She is also the navigator, the one steering the small team through the chaos of rising orders. Each day begins at 7 am with the routine of family: delivering her two daughters to school. By 8:30 am, her delivery box is already brimming with orders. She rides until mid-afternoon, pauses to pick up her children, and then continues the cycle — juggling work and motherhood with the precision of someone who has spent years learning to adapt.

For Chen, deliveries are more than a job; it is the first work she has ever held that allows her to earn a living while tending to her children. Even at the busiest moments, she can glance at her phone, or quickly dash out an order and return home to care for her daughters.

In April 2025, when Taobao Shangou, or Taobao Instant Commerce, an online daily life services platform, officially launched operations on Qushan Island, Chen's reliability earned her the trust of Hu Gaoyang, the logistics manager. She became the leader of the all-female riders, guiding new mothers into the unfamiliar, physically demanding world of delivery work.

Initially, both Chen and Hu worried that the women, many long accustomed to full-time childcare or household work, might not adapt to the harsh rhythms of outdoor delivery. But as the first surge of orders hit, those doubts quickly vanished.

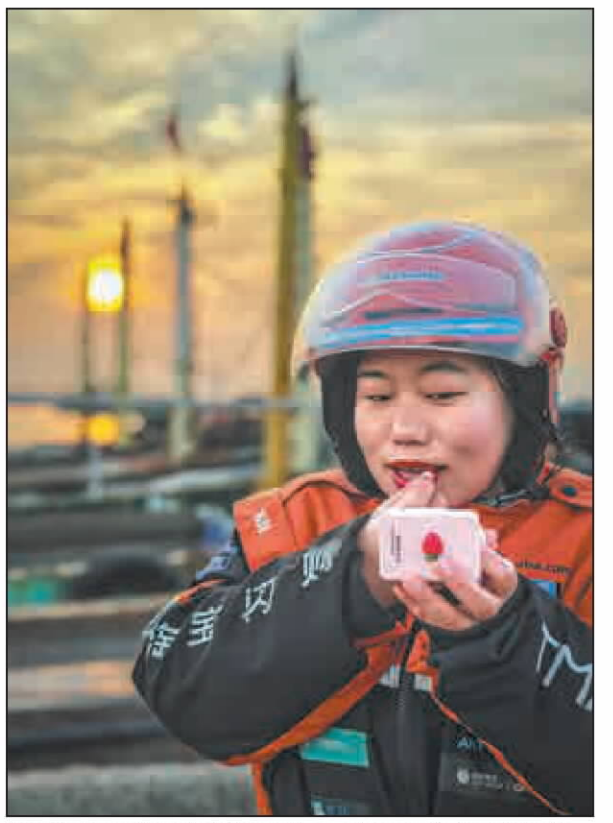
During the summer of 2025, order volumes skyrocketed by more than 1,000 percent. Some riders, brand-new to the job, handled 189 deliveries in a single day, and over the course of a month, completed more than 2,000.







> These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy."
>
> **Xie Hailong,** veteran photographer



Top: A group of female delivery riders gathers on Qushan Island's wharf for a photo. **Middle left:** In the rapeseed fields outside their homes, team member Wang Jinrong (left) picks a yellow flower, placing it on team leader Chen Lirong's head. **Middle right:** On an island with almost no elevators, these female delivery riders climb four to five floors per order — sometimes scaling hundreds of stairs in a single day. **Above:** Thirty-three-year-old Xu Limei loves bright lipstick. PHOTOS BY XIE HAILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chen herself was no stranger to struggle. Born in Anhui, she had drifted from factory work in Guangdong province to follow her husband to Jiangsu province. By 2016, marriage and childbirth brought her to Qushan, where her husband became a fisherman and she a homemaker, bound to domestic responsibilities while he went out to sea. Early one March morning, photographer Xie captured a photograph of her sending her husband off at 4 am, the harbor dark and silent.

"There was no dramatic embrace," Xie recalls. "Just a quiet farewell. The silent care between them hit me harder than any posed shot. I found myself tearing up behind the camera."

Raising two daughters while managing household repairs, medical trips and family errands, Chen's desire to work and earn never waned. A previous job in a local factory ended when it shut down, leaving her life once again in a transitional state. But as a delivery rider, she found not only an income, but also her calling. She schedules her team around childcare needs: mothers with younger children ride the mid-shift, those with older children the early shift, while those without children cover the late hours. In high season, she stays late to help manage orders herself, ensuring no one is overburdened.

At 46, Hu Yingrong became the first female delivery rider to join Chen's team. Having lived on the island for nearly 20 years, she's seen her life unfold in ways she never expected. Her eldest daughter is now in college, while her youngest son is still in middle school.

For nearly a decade, Hu Yingrong searched for work on the island that would allow her to balance earning an income with taking care of her children. Before she became a delivery rider, she tried various jobs but found herself doing the laborious task of mending fishing nets.

For a decade, she was bound to those nets. While the men of the island used fishing nets to bring in the harvest, Hu believed that women on the island had their own "mission" — the work of repairing and maintaining them. When the boats returned from fishing, they were filled with nets that needed mending: some torn and some covered in small fish and shrimp that had to be removed.

When her children were on vacation or at school, she would work in a fishnet factory surrounded by piles of discarded nets alongside other women just like her. They worked from sunrise to sunset, often losing track of time.

Then, in 2025, a new opportunity appeared. She became the second female delivery rider on the island, marking the beginning of a new chapter in her life. Finally, she had a job with a base salary, and the harder she worked, the more she earned.

However, the transition wasn't easy. Unlike younger riders like Chen, Hu Yingrong struggled at first. When she joined the team, she was faced with the busy periods of July and August — times when the number of orders was overwhelming. She couldn't even read the delivery routes on her phone's navigation system because they looked like a tangle of branches and twigs, constantly splitting and extending. But with persistence and a willingness to learn, she quickly adapted.

The island is full of buildings without elevators, and she often found herself climbing staircases, sometimes multiple flights in a row.

"My legs would hurt so much," she says, recalling the physical toll. Yet, she pushed through and excelled during the peak seasons, earning over 10,000 yuan ($1,472) a month — figures she had never dreamed of while working in the factory. During the off-season, she could still make 7,000 to 8,000 yuan — an amount that once seemed impossible.

Now, she has carved out some time for herself. After sending her son to school in the morning, and finishing her deliveries, she returns home to do housework or tend to her small vegetable garden.

The exhibition also features photos of other delivery riders taken by other photographers. According to the photo exhibition's curator Yang Han, more than 2,000 works were submitted for the event, with nearly 100,000 riders participating in the voting to select 200 images to be exhibited. The total number of votes surpassed 1 million.

Alongside Xie, more than 50 other photographers are featured, including Zhang Boyuan who has taken pictures of Tang Qi, a rider in Chengdu, Sichuan province, who twice jumped into an icy river to save people.

"Many photographers and ordinary people pick up their cameras and phones to document the riders around them," Yang notes.

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough," Xie says, quoting famous war photographer Robert Capa. "The same applies to portrait photography — this 'closeness' refers to how close you are to the life and heart of the person you're photographing.

"During this shoot, I was moved to tears several times by the passion and optimism of these mothers. Each of them faces various difficulties at home, yet they still wear a smile on their faces. In the past, I've often revisited the children I photographed for Project Hope, checking in on them every few years to see if they're still in school. I hope that in the future, I'll have the chance to return to this small island, to the 'CBD' they've been waiting for, to that little milk tea shop, and see them still wearing smiles on their faces, with their lives getting better and better," Xie says.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Ancelotti: Neymar call to be made on form, not sentiment



As Brazil's coach gets set to announce his World Cup squad, questions remain over inclusion of 34-year-old Santos star

Neymar (center) of Brazilian side Santos fights for the ball with Matias Reali (left) and Manuel Insaurralde of Argentine club San Lorenzo during a Copa Sudamericana group-stage match at the Pedro Bidegain stadium in Buenos Aires in April. AFP

Carlo Ancelotti will walk into Monday's Brazil squad announcement with a nation peering over his shoulder and one burning question hanging in the Rio de Janeiro air: Neymar, or no Neymar?

The 34-year-old forward is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos.

That leaves Ancelotti weighing romance against the cold, practical demands of fitness, as he lays out his high-intensity blueprint for the record five-time champion.

"When you have to choose, you have to consider many things," Ancelotti told reporters on Tuesday.

"Neymar is an important player for this country because of the talent he has always shown, but he has had problems and is working hard to recover. He has improved a lot recently, and is playing regularly. It is, obviously, not such an easy decision for me. We have to weigh up the pros and cons carefully."

Ancelotti hosted reporters at the Brazilian Football Confederation's headquarters in Rio, overlooking Barra da Tijuca, and spoke about the delicate selection call with the calm that has defined one of soccer's most decorated managerial careers.

The Italian is the only coach to have won league titles in all of Europe's big five leagues and has lifted a record five Champions League trophies as a manager, in addition to two as a player.

'Much loved'

Yet, few selection decisions will be picked apart quite like this one. Teammates have publicly lobbied for Neymar's inclusion, while supporters remain split between affection and anxiety over whether his body can still keep pace with his imagination.

"I know full well that Neymar is much loved, not only by the public, but also by the players," Ancelotti said.

"This is also a factor, because we have to consider the atmosphere that will surround Neymar's call-up. It's not as if I'm going to drop a bombshell in the dressing room. He's very well-liked, he's very much loved.

"I think it's normal for the players to express their opinion. I'm grateful to everyone who has given me advice; I thank you all.

"But, ultimately, the right person to make this decision, the one best placed to do so, is me."

Asked whether the players' appeals had influenced him, Ancelotti said they mattered only in one respect: they underlined that Neymar would not disrupt the group.

For Ancelotti, the dressing room is not the concern. The circus outside it may be.

"The internal atmosphere, I don't think it will affect the team at all. The atmosphere is a very positive, very clean one, and no matter which player is in the squad, it will remain positive and clean right to the end," Ancelotti said.

"But I can't control the external atmosphere and what the media says."

'Improved'

The bigger question may be whether or not Neymar still fits the soccer Ancelotti wants: four forwards who can run, press and track back, a demanding template for a player who has struggled to string together a sustained run of matches.



Carlo Ancelotti

The Italian, however, said Neymar had shown signs of progress.

"He has improved his fitness a lot in recent matches," Ancelotti said.

"He has played some very good matches lately and he can maintain a high intensity in a match, but there are matches and matches..."

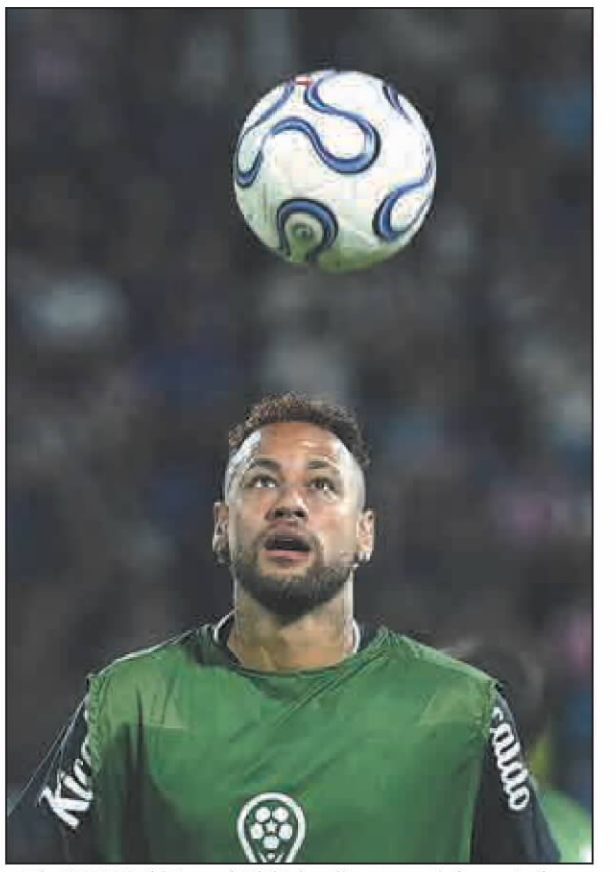
Ancelotti said the decision whether or not to select Neymar would be his alone.

"I haven't been pressured by anyone to call up Neymar. I have complete autonomy," he said. "The decision will be 100 percent professional. I will only take into account how he is performing as a footballer. Nothing else.

"Can I draw up a perfect squad? Impossible! But I can draw up a squad with fewer mistakes than others who might do so. Of that I am certain."

REUTERS





The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos, though he has shown signs of progress recently. REUTERS / AFP

With 30 days to go, LA has everything in place for the World Cup — except the pitch

INGLEWOOD, California — With 30 days to go until its first World Cup match, Los Angeles has the transportation and food nailed down. The playing surface, though? Not just yet.

The United States opens its campaign at SoFi Stadium (to be known as Los Angeles Stadium) against Paraguay on June 12, the first of eight matches to be played at the NFL stadium in Inglewood.

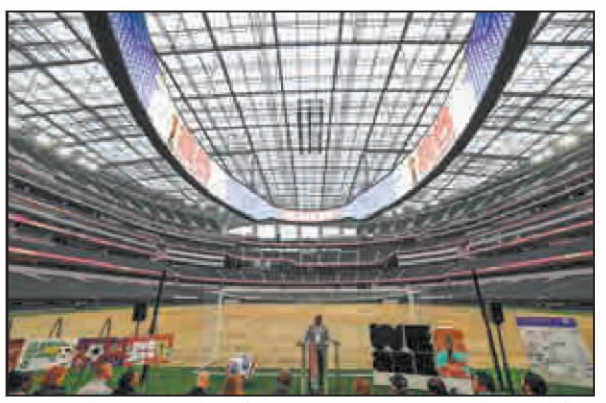
On Tuesday, though, the field was still dirt.

That was set to change on Wednesday, when, after a 1,600-mile trip in refrigerated trucks from Washington state, sod was due to arrive, ready to be laid over the next two days.

"This surface is the players' stage," said Otto Benedict, senior vice-president of facilities and campus operation for SoFi Stadium.

Construction on the field began April 13 after the stadium hosted a Monster truck event.

The stadium modified the field shared by the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers in two phases. Auxiliary space and wider dimensions were created by removing corner seats to meet FIFA specifications, and a sophisticated irrigation system was installed to maintain the grass.





Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium hosts an event marking 30 days until the World Cup on Tuesday, featuring themed desserts of a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse and a soccer ball filled with vanilla mousse, that will be available to fans during the tournament. AFP / AP

"To be the place where the energy first ignites, where the home crowd gets to set the tone for the rest of the tournament is a responsibility we don't take lightly," Benedict said.

Construction, landscape, grass and engineering crews were applauded by local World Cup organizers and community ambassador Magic Johnson, who pointed out his suite where he'll be watching.

"When you think about the financial impact it's going to have on Los Angeles, it's going to be amazing," said Johnson, who is a co-owner of LAFC in Major League Soccer and the Washington Spirit of the National Women's Soccer League.

Tours of the stadium during the tournament are being sold for $86.50 and premium seats, suites and hospitality packages are still available.

Fans availing themselves of those tickets will have access to a variety of food and drink options, from lime marinated shrimp and spiced lamb rack, to aged ribeye cap with bordelaise and mashed potatoes.

There is also a range of themed desserts, including a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse, raspberry, chocolate crunch and chocolate sponge.

Metro debuted special edition TAP cards featuring three FIFA-themed designs, 17 country-specific designs, four FIFA collector cards, including a light-up card, and a collector's box.

"We want to provide a system that is safe, fast and fun," LA Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins said.

Metro is working with 11 other transit lines in the region to offer direct-to-stadium bus services for $3.75 from 15 park-and-ride lots in the LA and Orange counties. Reserved parking lots range in price from $55 to more than $100. Fans can access 300 dedicated buses to every match in an effort to avoid disrupting regular services.

The official FIFA Fan Festival will be held from June 11-14 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum with big screens showing games. Ten fan zones around LA county will host activities and watch parties.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Power of one
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Matching steps
Ballet production blends classical dance with Uygur folk heritage
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日報 FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026



President Xi Jinping hosts a banquet at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday to welcome US President Donald Trump, who is on a state visit to China. YAN YAN / XINHUA

China, US set out new vision for ties

Building constructive bilateral relations of strategic stability agreed to at Beijing summit

By **CAO DESHENG** and **ZHANG YUNBI**

China and the United States will work toward building a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability, a new vision that President Xi Jinping and visiting US President Donald Trump agreed was how the world's two largest economies should handle their relations.

The two leaders on Friday met for tea at the Zhongnanhai compound, which Xi said is the place where the Chinese leaders work and live, "including myself".

The compound used to be part of the imperial garden, and there is a lot of history here, Xi said, adding that one of the trees he and Trump admired during their walk is 490 years old.

Xi said he would send the seeds of the Chinese roses they saw in the garden to Trump as a gift.

During their summit on Thursday at the Great Hall of the People in the Chinese capital, Xi said that China is committed to the steady, sound and sustainable development of China-US relations.

The new vision will provide strategic guidance for China-US relations over the next three years and beyond, and should be welcomed by the people of both countries and the international community, he said.

Xi said that "constructive strategic stability" means positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, sound stability with moderate competition, constant stability with manageable differences, and enduring stability with promises of peace.

Building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability should not be a mere slogan, but concrete action taken by both sides toward the same goal, he added.

Xi expressed his readiness to work with Trump to set the course and steer the giant ship of China-US relations, in order to make 2026 a historic and landmark year that opens a new chapter in bilateral ties.

He also urged the US to handle the Taiwan question with extra caution, saying that it is the most important issue in China-US relations.

He emphasized that if it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, he said.

Xi also called on both countries to make better use of communication channels in the political, diplomatic and military-to-military fields, and expand exchanges and cooperation in areas such as the economy and trade, health, agriculture, tourism, people-to-people ties and law enforcement.

Trump called Xi "a great leader" and China "a great country", saying that he has tremendous respect for the Chinese president and the Chinese people.

Noting that the meeting between Xi and himself was the biggest summit the world was watching, Trump said he will work together with Xi to strengthen communication and cooperation, properly handle differences, make bilateral relations better than ever and embrace a "fantastic" future.

He said that the US and China are the most important and most powerful countries in the world. Together they can do a lot of big and good things for the two countries and the world, Trump said.

Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said that the Sino-US summit once again served as a testament to the pivotal role of head-of-state diplomacy, and showed the remarkable importance both countries attach to bilateral relations.

The new vision of building a constructive relationship of strategic stability is the latest reminder of China's proactive approach in shaping its ties with the US, she said.

Diao Daming, professor with Renmin University of China, said the new vision could usher in a new phase in China-US relations and help the two nations explore the right way to get along with each other in the new era.

Diao pointed out that bilateral ties are expected to remain generally stable for a period of time if the US manages to carry forward and keep endorsing this new vision as a bilateral consensus.

Su said that both countries shared a need for strategic stability.

"Constructive strategic stability does not mean that China and the US have no differences. Given the different national conditions of the two countries, differences are inevitable," Su said.

"However, when it comes to managing these differences and maintaining strategic stability, both sides need to work together toward the same goal. This is a test of wisdom for both nations."

Diao said that taking cooperation as the mainstay of the relationship means that although both sides have their own economic and trade interests, the relationship is generally mutually beneficial.

"We believe that competition in these areas should remain within reasonable bounds. The competition should be healthy, allowing both sides to achieve development while supporting each other, instead of a life-and-death struggle or a battle for victory," he said.

Seeking "sound stability with moderate competition" means the entire landscape of China-US relations should not be defined by "strategic competition", Diao said.

"In recent years, bilateral relations have remained generally stable and avoided a free fall. The next step should be to build on this progress," he added.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Ministry reiterated its position on the Iran situation in a press release on Friday. The statement was released after the two heads of state exchanged their views on major international and regional issues, including the situation in the Middle East, during the summit.

The ministry's spokesperson said that finding an early way out of the conflict serves the interests of both the US and Iran, as well as countries in the region and the rest of the world.

China always believes that dialogue and negotiation are the right way forward, and the use of force is a dead end, the spokesperson said.

It is important to reach a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible, enable peace and stability to return to the Middle East and Gulf region at an early date, and lay the foundation for building a sustainable security architecture for the region, the spokesperson added.

Contact the writers at caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

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Heritage site visit adds another dimension to dialogue

By **MO JINGXI**
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

The more than 600-year-old Temple of Heaven in Beijing provided a symbolic setting on Thursday for President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump as they posed for photos at the site after their closely watched talks earlier in the day.

The visit to the UNESCO World Heritage site added a cultural dimension to the summit between the leaders of the world's two largest economies.

Built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the architectural marvel welcomed the two leaders on an early summer afternoon, as ancient cypresses stood in quiet grace and a gentle breeze refreshed the air.

Xi greeted Trump outside the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Temple of Heaven's iconic, triple-eaved, blue-tiled landmark.

The two presidents walked up the steps and entered the hall, where they viewed its architectural features, from the precise fittings of its mortise-and-tenon joints and interlocking wooden brackets to the seamless integration of astronomical calendar concepts with its structure.

In the hall, they appreciated the concept of harmony among all things and respect for the law of nature.

Xi noted that in 2017, he and Trump toured the Palace Museum along Beijing's Central Axis.

The Temple of Heaven dates from the same period as the Palace Museum and embodies the idea that Heaven is round and Earth is square, reflecting the view of the universe and guiding philosophy of the Chinese people, he said.

Xi told Trump that ancient Chinese rulers would hold prayer ceremonies at the site for prosperity of the nation, happiness of the people and favorable weather for good harvests. It embodies the traditional Chinese ethos that people are the foundation of a country and only when the people lead a good life can the country thrive, he said.

*See **Summit,** page 2*

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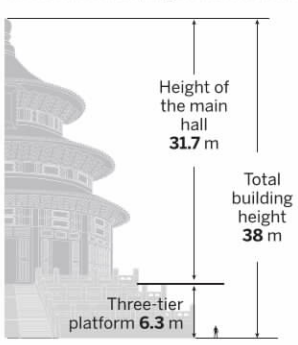
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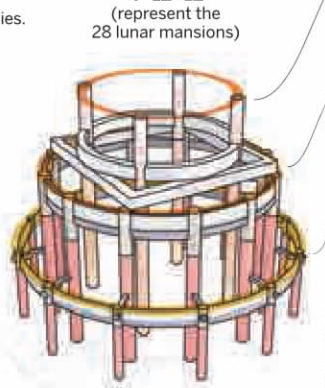
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CULTURAL MEANINGS OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

First built in 1420, the Temple of Heaven is China's largest and best-preserved Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) era complex, meant for heaven-worshiping rituals and ceremonies.



The 28 columns
4+12+12
(represent the 28 lunar mansions)



4 Inner Ring Dragon Well Columns
(represent the four seasons)
Height **19.2** m
Column diameter **1.2** m

12 Middle Ring Golden Columns
(represent the 12 lunar months)
Height **15** m
Column diameter **1** m

12 Outer Ring Eaves Columns
(represent the 12 two-hour periods)
Height **12** m
Column diameter **0.8** m

Together they represent the **24** solar terms.

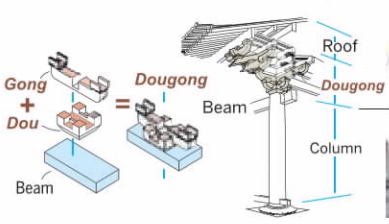
The three-tier platform is made of marble.



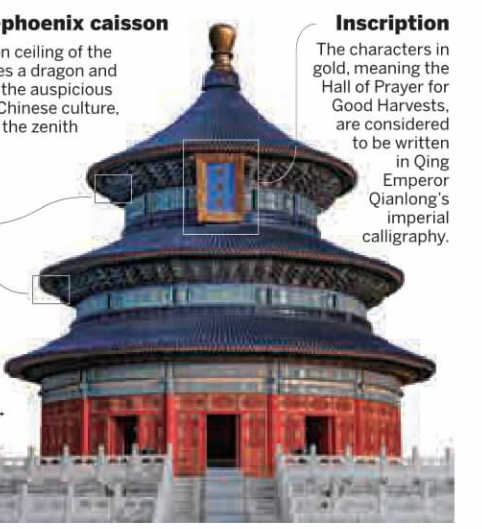


Dragon-phoenix caisson
The caisson ceiling of the hall features a dragon and a phoenix, the auspicious totems in Chinese culture, flying over the zenith of heaven.

Dougong
Interlocking wooden brackets assembled without nails showcase ancient Chinese craftsmanship.



Inscription
The characters in gold, meaning the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, are considered to be written in Qing Emperor Qianlong's imperial calligraphy.



GRAPHICS BY TIAN CHI, JORGE CORTES, MUKESH MOHANAN, WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Xi: As partners, China and US can help each other succeed

Nations 'must make it work' to advance global well-being, he says

By **ZHAO JIA**
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn





Left: President Xi Jinping addresses a banquet held on Thursday to welcome US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. LI XIANG / XINHUA **Right:** US President Donald Trump makes a speech at the welcoming banquet on Thursday in Beijing. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI / AFP

Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America great again can go hand in hand, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday, adding that China and the United States can help each other succeed and advance the well-being of the whole world.

Xi made the remarks when delivering a toast at a welcoming banquet hosted at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in honor of visiting US President Donald Trump.

As this year marks the start of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for economic and social development, Xi said that over 1.4 billion Chinese people, drawing on the rich heritage of the nation's more than 5,000-year-old civilization, are advancing Chinese modernization on all fronts through high-quality development.

He noted that this year marks the 250th anniversary of US independence, and over 300 million people in the US are reinvigorating the spirit of patriotism, innovation and enterprise, embarking on a new journey for the development of their country.

"The peoples of China and the US are both great peoples," Xi said.

Looking back on the history of China-US relations, Xi emphasized that 55 years ago, the two countries engaged in Ping-Pong Diplomacy. "The door that had remained frozen for over 20 years was opened," he said, describing that diplomatic endeavor as a milestone in contemporary international relations.

Since then, through numerous examples of mutual openness and cooperation, China and the US have continuously written tales of friendship, he added.

Under the new circumstances, Xi said that he and Trump have held multiple meetings and phone calls, working to maintain the overall stability of China-US relations.

He said they both believe that the China-US relationship is "the most important bilateral relationship in the world", and that the two countries "must make it work and never mess it up".

"Both China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," Xi said, emphasizing that the two countries should be partners, not rivals.

Xi added that he and Trump have agreed to promote steady, sound and sustainable development of bilateral ties and bring more peace, prosperity and progress to the world.

Reviewing the history of China-US relations, Xi said that the key to the steady development of bilateral relations lies in whether the two sides can uphold mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

The China-US relationship concerns the well-being of more than 1.7 billion people in both countries and affects the interests of over 8 billion people across the world, Xi noted. "Both sides should rise up to this historic responsibility and steer the giant ship of China-US relations forward steadily and in the right direction," he said.

Trump, in his toast, thanked Xi for the gracious reception accorded to him. He described the day as "fantastic" and the visit as important, adding that both sides engaged in positive and constructive conversations.

The people of the US and China share mutual appreciation and respect, and their friendship goes back a long way, Trump said.

He said the relationship between the US and China is the most consequential bilateral relationship in the world and that, together, the two countries have the opportunity to create a better future for the world.



Business leaders from the United States, including Tim Cook (left) of Apple and Jensen Huang (second from left) of Nvidia, arrive on Thursday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to attend a group meeting with Premier Li Qiang. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Country to open door wider to foreign businesses

By **CAO DESHENG**
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping said on Thursday that China will open its door wider to the world, and it welcomes more mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with US entrepreneurs accompanying US President Donald Trump on his state visit to China. The meeting took place during talks between Xi and Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Trump asked each of the leaders to present themselves to Xi, saying that he encourages them to expand their cooperation with China.

Xi noted that US enterprises are deeply involved in China's reform and opening-up, and both sides benefit from this engagement.

He said that US companies will have even broader prospects in China going forward.

The business leaders accompanying Trump include Chief Executive Officer of Tesla and SpaceX Elon Musk, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg and Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon, among others.

On Thursday afternoon, Premier Li Qiang also met with the US entrepreneurs. He emphasized that a stable and predictable economic and trade relationship between China and the US serves the interests of both countries and the world.

Li said that amid growing instability and uncertainty in the current international situation, it is of great significance for both countries to maintain open and unimpeded dialogue and communication to sustain a stable and healthy bilateral relationship, as this injects certainty and positive energy into global peace and development.

Noting that the economic and trade cooperation between China and the US is large scale, Li said that strengthening cooperation can promote mutual benefit and win-win outcomes and contribute to global economic growth.

As the world's two largest economies, he said, China and the US should work together to lead in promoting open cooperation, manage their differences properly and maintain their economic and trade relationship, serving as a stabilizing and constructive force in the world.

A Chinese economy with steady growth will provide more opportunities for enterprises from all countries, the premier said.

Li highlighted the prominent feature of the Chinese market in terms of scale, growth and stability, saying that new demands are being rapidly unleashed and the new drivers of growth are being strengthened, leading to sustained and positive momentum for economic growth.

The nation welcomes more foreign enterprises to explore the Chinese market and share in the development opportunities, he said.

The premier expressed the Chinese government's unwavering commitment to upholding a stable and open policy environment, and said that China will continue to expand high-standard opening-up, provide high-quality services to foreign enterprises and improve policies.

He expressed the hope that more US enterprises will continue to expand their presence in the Chinese market, strengthen the bond of mutually beneficial China-US cooperation and serve as a bridge to promote communication and dialogue between the two countries, and help US people from all walks of life view China's development more objectively and rationally.

The US business executives emphasized the critical importance of US-China relations, saying that the successful meeting between the leaders of the two countries has injected new momentum into US-China economic and trade cooperation.

The US business community is optimistic about China's development prospects and positively views China's ongoing efforts to advance high-standard opening-up and create a world-class business environment, they said, adding that they are willing to expand cooperation with China and make greater efforts to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

New vision of stability guiding relationship

WORLD WATCH
By Anthony Moretti

What people all over the globe want to see during this state visit is the identification of areas of cooperation that will advance bilateral stability between the two nations and boost global peace prospects.

The smiles that could be seen when United States President Donald Trump arrived in Beijing on Wednesday for a state visit were again on display hours later when he met with President Xi Jinping.

The world wants China and the US to be partners. Therefore, what people all over the globe want to see during this state visit is the identification of areas of cooperation that will advance bilateral stability between the two nations and boost global peace prospects. After the meeting, there is every reason to believe that such a framework is being created.

At one point, the Chinese president said that the two countries should work together to make 2026 "a historic and landmark year" for China-US relations.

Chinese officials have consistently noted that ideas such as mutual respect and win-win cooperation are essential ingredients of diplomacy in the modern world. The global community will respond positively knowing that respect was regularly on display during the state visit.

China has shown time and time again in recent years that it is committed to stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relations. Due to the "strategic guidance" that President Xi said both presidents could offer their governments and other officials, there is more reassurance.

This is exactly what the global community wanted to see: China and the US creating the necessary structure as they have agreed to work toward building a bilateral relationship of "constructive strategic stability" to make the world a better place.

As Xi said, the "constructive strategic stability" should be positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, sound stability with moderate competition, constant stability with manageable differences, and enduring stability with promises of peace.

Such a structure is crucial at a time when the world is facing fragmentation, unilateralism, tensions and even wars.

The foundation for that structure? Willingness for cooperation; competition that is managed creatively and not destructively; an understanding that differences must be discussed openly; and a firm commitment to peace.

Similarities, not differences, should define the bilateral relationship and allow for a brighter future. Moving forward, it is incumbent on both governments to consistently deliver a message that as major powers, they are determined to be positive stewards for the world for this generation and future generations.

President Trump said that he expects a positive future for China-US relations as well. The global community will breathe easier if it is convinced that the two countries can work toward closer cooperation and more commitments in resolving differences, which will benefit bilateral relations and contribute to the stability of the world at large.

This state visit, if it remains on its trajectory, could very well be remembered for giving people the hope that new vision of constructive strategic stability will provide well-needed guidance for bilateral relations and the well-being of the international community.

While the atmosphere in Beijing was positive on Thursday, concrete results were expected to follow as the state visit continues.

It is important that the two sides first work through equal-footed consultations to bridge their differences and find more fields of common interest. As the Chinese president said in a meeting with US business leaders accompanying Trump, US businesses have been deeply involved in China's reform and opening-up, which benefits both sides. He promised that China's opening-up will be deepened, and China welcomes business cooperation from the US side on the basis of mutual benefit.

Moreover, what might a "historic and landmark year" look like? Imagine China and the US creating an environment in which they unceasingly work together to tackle the world's most challenging problems: global unrest, climate change, food insecurity, the potential for improper use of artificial intelligence, income inequality, the next world health crisis, barriers to free trade and more. Granted the two presidents will not find solutions to all of those issues in just two days, but they can — and so far have — set the right tone. Sustaining the positive momentum displayed at Thursday's meeting in Beijing will be critical. The world is eager to see that it does.

As always, the open hand of friendship prevails over confrontation and estrangement.

The author is an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in the US state of Pennsylvania. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily or Robert Morris University.

Summit: Temple of Heaven visit continues a tradition in diplomacy

From page 1

Xi said the Communist Party of China has inherited and carried forward the people-centered philosophy rooted in Chinese civilization, and has always adhered to its fundamental commitment of serving the people wholeheartedly, thereby gaining the firm support and heartfelt endorsement of the people.

Trump said he still has vivid memories of his 2017 visit to the Palace Museum.

The Temple of Heaven, which has stood magnificently for more than six centuries, showcases the fine art of classical Chinese architecture as well as the splendid and profound traditional culture, he said.

"It's great. Great place. Incredible. China is beautiful," Trump said.

Both the United States and China are great countries, and their peoples are both great and wise, Trump said, adding that the two countries should deepen mutual understanding and enhance friendship between their peoples.

The Temple of Heaven visit on Thursday continued a tradition in China-US diplomacy in which culturally significant venues are used to convey messages beyond the formal agenda.

Trump's visit to the Temple of Heaven marked the first time in 51 years that a sitting US president had visited the landmark since then-US president Gerald Ford toured it during his visit to China in 1975.

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SINO-US SUMMIT



President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump pose for a photo on Friday at the Zhongnanhai compound in Beijing. EVAN VUCCI / REUTERS

HISTORIC BEIJING SUMMIT



President Xi and US President Trump pose for a photo in front of the Qiniandian, or the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, while visiting the Temple of Heaven in Beijing on Thursday.
SHEN HONG / XINHUA



President Xi greets US President Trump outside the Great Hall of the People prior to their talks in Beijing on Thursday.
HUANG JINGWEN / XINHUA



President Xi holds a welcoming ceremony for US President Trump outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday.
ZHAI JIANLAN / XINHUA



President Xi holds talks with US President Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday. YIN BOGU / XINHUA



Members of the delegation accompanying US President Trump on his state visit to China wait ahead of the welcoming ceremony in Beijing on Thursday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Exchange programs offer youths firsthand experience

By **XU LIN** in Beijing
and **CHEN YE** in Hangzhou



US students experience traditional Chinese rubbing in April during the 3rd Sino-US Youth Connect Season launched by Wenzhou-Kean University. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

University students from the United States are making rubbings from inscriptions on wooden tablets. They carefully apply ink and press paper to create prints, experiencing the intangible cultural heritage firsthand.

Over the years, Wenzhou-Kean University in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, has offered various exchange programs. Students from the US visit museums, companies, and villages, experience cultural heritage, join handicraft workshops and interact with Chinese peers.

"My exchange experience in China was life-changing. I've come to not only love Chinese culture but also the hospitable people," said Zinnyah Nutornti, who's an undergraduate in an exchange program at Wenzhou-Kean University.

Nutornti from Kean University in the US joined a two-week summer exchange program at Wenzhou-Kean University in 2025 and eager to experience more of life in China, she later applied for a semester-long exchange.

She recently took a weekend trip to Hangzhou in Zhejiang province with her roommate.

"Words can't even begin to describe the immeasurable amount of joy, exploring the mountains and West Lake. I became so overwhelmed with emotion. There were multiple moments when I had to stop in the middle of our trip to think about how much more life has to offer. After returning, I began to consider moving to China to settle down," she said.

She said such opportunities open doors for the younger generation to explore the world and build real connections.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the official signing of the cooperation agreement between Wenzhou University and Kean University to jointly establish Wenzhou-Kean University.

Back in 2006, President Xi Jinping, then secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhejiang Provincial Committee, witnessed the signing ceremony in the US.

In November 2023, Xi announced an initiative to invite 50,000 young people from the US to China for exchange and study programs over a five-year period.

In early 2024, the university responded to the call with a plan to welcome 1,000 teenagers from the US to China over the next five years, and it has already hosted 501 young people from the US.

Pan Jianzhong, chair of the board of directors of the university, said China-US youth exchanges have shifted from "having exchanges" to "willing to engage", and from "visiting China" to "immersing themselves in China". It proves that when young people challenge stereotypes and reach out to each other, their connection can become the most vibrant and solid foundation for China-US people-to-people friendship.

Taishun county in Wenzhou is known for its well-preserved wooden arch bridges, built with traditional Chinese mortise-and-tenon joints that require no nails or rivets.

In 2024, traditional designs and practices for building Chinese wooden arch bridges were transferred from UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2021, Wenzhou-Kean University started the Kean Twin Bridge Program to promote the culture of Chinese arch bridges abroad. The university has organized students from the US to visit Wenzhou's covered bridges, produced a bilingual short video about them, and held an artificial intelligence video contest on covered bridges.

"Through this concrete cultural symbol, we aim to give young people from the US a more direct sense of the Chinese culture," Pan said. He added that they encourage joint research on the culture and protection of covered bridges, with resources from both universities in China and the US.

Matthew Wood, lecturer of graphic design at Wenzhou-Kean University, teaches students to create three-dimensional reconstructions of the ancient covered bridges in Wenzhou. "Students can learn practical skills, local history and the importance of preserving cultural heritage at the same time," he said.

"China boasts rich and unique regional cultures. Wenzhou's covered bridges are aesthetically pleasing and integrated into the surrounding mountains and rivers; they still function as social hubs for locals."

Contact the writers at xulin@chinadaily.com.cn

US martial arts enthusiast makes the right moves

By **CHEN MEILING** in Beijing
and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan



Jake Pinnick practices tai chi at the Wudang Mountain in Shiyan, Central China's Hubei province, in October.
CAO LINGLING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Time is silent, yet it never fails those who keep moving forward," Jake Pinnick said on RedNote.

Wearing a loose-sleeved training uniform with a flowing black beard and a topknot tied up with a hairpin, Pinnick, 36, from the United States, told an unusual story of "Becoming Chinese".

At Wudang Mountain in Shiyan, Hubei province, Pinnick was seen guiding a group of students practicing martial arts. The mountain is one of China's most famous and sacred Taoist sites, where Pinnick is known as a famous foreign coach.

He first demonstrated the sword routines once, then let the students follow along. He moved among the crowd, correcting each one's posture one by one.

In his view, Wudang martial arts are never meant to compete against or defeat others, but to achieve balance between inner spirit and outer strength, and integrate hardness with softness.

"They are supposed to develop you into a morally better person through some kind of character building," said Pinnick, whose fans have surpassed 2 million online.

Over the last decade in China, Pinnick has completely adapted to local culture. Now he likes drinking hot tea. He plays a vertical bamboo flute instead of the piano. He refuses waiters' kind offers of a knife and fork. Over the years, even his hair and beard have turned black, which, in his explanation, is that "each land shapes its people". He is proud of his Chinese name Li Zigen, which was given by his master.

Though facing doubts from some netizens, he never regrets his choice.

"I hope that, as a foreigner who has studied and inherited traditional Chinese culture in China, I can promote understanding and exchanges between different cultures. I want to let people from all over the world appreciate the charm of traditional Chinese culture and benefit from it," he said.

And his experience has proven that what began with a teenager's kung fu dream has borne fruitful results in promoting China-US friendship.

A fan of Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee, Pinnick had always wanted to learn "real kung fu from its roots". Fascinated by Yuan Shimao's graceful movements with the Eight Immortals Staff, a classic long weapon routine in Wudang martial arts, on YouTube, he finally made up his mind to come to China and explore the world of martial arts in 2010.

At that time, Yuan, the 15th-generation inheritor of the Wudang Sanfeng School, was recruiting students for a five-year international traditional martial arts program. He spent over a year arranging his university studies and flew to China.

"Back then, I could only speak a few simple Chinese (sentences). I could neither read nor understand the language. Every time the train stopped at a station, I grew extremely nervous and kept asking others: 'Is this Wudang Mountain?'" he said.

Twenty-four students from countries, including the US, Australia, Canada and Germany, were admitted to this class.

"It was so hard to begin with," Pinnick said, adding he had a hard time meeting the demands of the training because of his lack of flexibility and suppleness. "I couldn't straighten my back, and I couldn't do the splits at all."

He woke up at 5:30 am every morning to practice, irrespective of rain or shine, had his body hit with bamboo strips to build resilience, and was punished with palm strikes and horse stance squats for making mistakes.

By repeating every move dozens, or even hundreds of times each day, putting in far more effort than most people, Pinnick gradually realized martial arts are not merely a set of routines, but a philosophy of cultivating both inner character and physical form.

"In the past, I always insisted on winning every argument. Now I am able to control and calm my emotions. My master taught me: Cultivate virtue before practicing martial arts. For example, the tai chi opening form requires moving with both arms as if holding water. Though it looks like simple physical training, it actually teaches humility and tolerance."

Yuan, his teacher, said many students learn kung fu out of temporary curiosity. Over the years, he had seen countless students arrive full of excitement, only to leave dejected and discouraged.

Despite the language barrier and vast cultural differences, Pinnick's burning passion for martial arts as well as his perseverance deeply moved Yuan.

During this period on the mountain, he met his future wife, a Chinese woman. They got married in 2014. They have a daughter.

After completing the program, he went back to the US with his family, only to find himself "suspended between Chinese and American culture", so he decided to go back to Wudang Mountain in 2018 to teach and promote Wudang culture.

With encouragement from his wife, in 2020 Pinnick started posting videos about martial arts, vertical bamboo flute performances, and interpretations of Taoism philosophy, which went viral on social media platforms, attracting a lot of fans.

By now, he has taught some 700 foreign students, with the oldest studying for 8 years. Some visited Wudang Mountain to seek in-person instruction.

In April last year, he secured China's Foreign Permanent Resident ID Card.

Currently, he is busy preparing for a new international summer camp. "I hope my own experience can inspire more people to pursue their dreams. Whether it is a passion for martial arts or a desire to explore different cultures, everyone should try and persist," he said.

Contact the writers at chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

WWII legacy honors peace and friendship

Internment camp's painful history also shows resilience in shared humanity

By **YANG RAN** in Beijing
and **ZHAO RUIXUE** in Jinan

While the name Auschwitz echoes through history as a grim symbol of Nazi atrocities during World War II, another camp, half a world away in China's Shandong province, holds a story less known.

In the city of Weifang, once known as Weixian or Weihsien, stands the Courtyard of the Happy Way. Established as a church, school and hospital complex by a US missionary in 1882, Japanese forces converted it into the Weihsien Internment Camp to imprison foreign nationals in China during WWII.

Unlike the well-documented concentration camps of Europe, the camp in China has remained largely obscure, even for the families of those who endured it.

For John Stanley, a history professor at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, the journey into this forgotten history began in 1991, when he accompanied his father, Charles A. Stanley, on a visit to the Weihsien Internment Camp site.

Charles A. Stanley was interned at Weihsien with his parents in 1943 when he was just 10 months old. He remained there until US soldiers and a Chinese translator liberated the camp in 1945.

But this part of his family's history had been shrouded in silence. "The camp wasn't discussed when I was growing up and, according to my father, it didn't come up much with his mother or father either," John Stanley explained. "I believe that many have left that part of their lives behind and do not wish to engage with it."

Stanley's own journey to uncover this history began in 1991 during a visit to the site to dedicate a memorial to Eric Liddell, the 1924 Olympic 400-meter champion who died of illness in the camp. Liddell was one of at least 31 internees who died during imprisonment due to a severe shortage of supplies and medical care.

"It was that trip that started my interest in studying China and East Asia more generally," said Stanley. "In all of my research, I learned much more about the makeup of the internees and the role of the local Chinese population."

The camp was set up in retaliation for the US internment of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Over 2,000 civilians from 25 Allied nations were rounded up across China and imprisoned in the largest internment camp in Asia.

The internees include some prominent figures like Arthur W. Hummel Jr, who later became the second US ambassador to China. Hummel managed to escape before the camp's liberation with the aid of local Chinese.

Stanley emphasized that the help from the local Chinese "served to keep up the spirits of the internees as news became harder to find during the later years of the war".

Most notable were their efforts to communicate with the internees and set up a 'Black Market' for foodstuffs they could not get at the camp store, or they were short on, he said.

"Eggs were the most famous, but I believe that at one point, a live chicken was thrown over the camp wall," he added.

Touching story

Zhang Zhiren, a Europe-based writer who spent years researching and writing a book on the camp, said: "The bravery of the local Chinese, who risked their lives to help the foreign internees, is the most touching part of the story."

Zhang's book, *Weihsien West Civilians Concentration Camp: 1943-1945*, documents the cruel treatment of Allied civilians in the camp, their efforts to survive in extreme conditions and the acts of bravery and kindness of local Chinese to help the foreigners.

Zhang highlighted the story of Zhang Xingtai, a local villager who worked as a latrine cleaner in the camp. "The Japanese thought of him as just an ordinary farmer, not a threat, but didn't realize he became a 'bridge of information'," Zhang said. The internees were cut off from news of the outside. "Risking their lives, Zhang Xingtai and his son brought news from the outside in and smuggled information out. The news of Japan's defeat was passed on by them at great risk."

Despite their own hardships, the local people gathered food to send to the starving internees, risking everything to cross the Japanese-controlled barbed wire and electric fences, Zhang said. He shared the tragic story of a local child who was electrocuted on the camp's perimeter fence while trying to deliver food, with the Japanese forbidding the retrieval of the body.

"The people of Weifang didn't care what nationality the internees were," Zhang said. "They only knew that people were suffering and that they had to help. This kindness transcended war and national boundaries."

> "The bravery of the local Chinese, who risked their lives to help the foreign internees, is the most touching part of the story."
>
> **Zhang Zhiren,** writer of *Weihsien West Civilians Concentration Camp: 1943-1945*

Zhang stressed the importance of remembering the history of the Weihsien Internment Camp. "The memories of the camp are so painful that for decades, survivors were almost silent. As time passes, the survivors of the camp are dwindling, and fewer and fewer people know about this history."

His book is an attempt to rescue this shared memory, said Zhang. "Eighty years ago, Chinese people and foreign nationals helped each other through thick and thin. This story is the best footnote to the concept of a community of shared future for humanity."

The history of the Weihsien Internment Camp led the International Cities of Peace, a nonprofit organization promoting the global peace movement, to designate Weifang as the 308th International City of Peace in 2021, making it the second such city in China after Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province.

In celebration of Weifang's fifth anniversary as an International City of Peace, J. Frederick Arment, chair of the International Cities of Peace, said Weifang has consistently moved forward in the profound and healing steps of building peace from historical trauma with future hope.

In 2024, as China and the US marked the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the story of the Weihsien Internment Camp made its way to San Francisco in the form of a special exhibition. Stanley also attended the opening ceremony as a representative of the descendants of former camp internees.

"I believe their (Weifang's) efforts to maintain the buildings and their efforts to create a traveling exhibition that went to San Francisco show a commitment to raising awareness about war and its consequences," Stanley said.

Speaking of the relevance of the spirit of peace from the Weihsien Internment Camp history, Stanley expressed hope that this history would encourage diplomacy and the use of international institutions to resolve conflicts rather than resorting to violence or other pressure tactics.

Contact the writers at yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Music underscores shared quest for harmony

Educators, students, players united by bonds of curiosity, common goals

By **CHEN NAN**
chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

It began with a *dizi*, the traditional Chinese small bamboo flute with a tone both piercing and plaintive, capable of sliding effortlessly between virtuosic runs and tender fragile whispers.

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, 37-year-old composer Niccolo Athens, a faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School, vividly recalls the first time he heard *dizi* music played at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. It felt like discovering a new musical universe, he said.

"It was fluent, sophisticated, and completely unfamiliar to me," Athens said of hearing a piece for three *dizi* composed by Guo Wenjing. "It combined modern compositional techniques with a deep understanding of the instruments."

A graduate of Cornell University in New York, Athens was awarded a Fulbright grant, and spent an academic year in residence at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 2014, beginning a China journey that would also include Shanghai and Tianjin.

In 2019, he was appointed to the inaugural faculty of The Tianjin Juilliard School.

As the first overseas branch of the renowned New York Juilliard School, the Tianjin campus broke ground in 2017 and offers a US-accredited master's degree from the prestigious school. The Tianjin school's graduate program opened in the fall of 2020 with the first intake of students.



Young musicians from different countries perform during a concert conducted by David Robertson at The Tianjin Juilliard School on May 30, 2025. XINHUA

Instrumental changes

Two of Athens' new works are going to be premiered at the Tianjin school. He recently composed *Five Classical Lyrics*, based on classical poetry from the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties chosen by his students, and featuring music drawing inspiration from lesser-known Sichuan folk songs preserved in provincial songbooks from the 1980s.

He believes music carries a unique capacity to foster connection. "There's really nothing that bridges these two countries right now in the same way music can," he said.

He still vividly recalls his time at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Athens said he encountered intense dedication to performance and an unexpected embrace of contemporary composition, which inspired him to compose his own works. Unlike Western music conservatories, where classical repertoires often dominate, Chinese musicians actively sought new works from living composers, creating a vibrant culture of collaboration and innovation.

"The people I met are what really sticks with me," Athens said. Friendships formed in classrooms, concerts, and workshops became as formative as any formal instruction.



Above left: Niccolo Athens, a faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School, conducts during Festival Connect, Tianjin Juilliard's flagship performance festival, in Tianjin on Jan 16. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above right: Violist Molly Carr exchanges performance techniques with a student during a masterclass session on Nov 4. XINHUA



Right: Athens lectures students during a class at the school. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "There's really nothing that bridges these two countries right now in the same way music can."
>
> **Niccolo Athens,** a US composer and faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School

Learning to compose music for Chinese instruments proved a gradual process. His early attempts involved the *pipa* (a traditional lute) and *sheng* (a free-reed wind instrument), which he mostly learned about from video tutorials and guidance from friends abroad.

"I had to adapt my writing to the character of the instruments," he said. "It wasn't about capability — they (musicians) could play all the notes — but about understanding the way the instrument wants to speak."

He said the first piece he wrote that he felt truly reflected both his voice and the instrument's spirit was for the *guqin* (traditional Chinese zither) and string quartet, a milestone in his creative journey.

Language, too, was a path of careful immersion. Athens began studying Chinese while at the Juilliard in New York, where he received his Bachelor of Music in composition in 2010, motivated by a desire to engage fully with the culture.

"Some people ask me how I feel in China now, and I just tell them it feels like home," he said.

Beyond language

For the students at Tianjin Juilliard, the bridging of cultures is not theoretical — it is a daily practice.

When the 23-year-old Manou Magdalena Chakravorty arrived in Tianjin from Chicago last August to study cello, she expected the city to feel foreign and overwhelming.

During her undergraduate study, her professor was He Sihao, a former faculty member at the Robert McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University. But instead of being overwhelmed, she found herself captivated by Tianjin.

"The campus was incredibly beautiful. Sometimes I just walk along the river and take it all in — it's very calming," said Chakravorty, who grew up in a multicultural family that embraced the cultures of both Europe and Asia.

Chakravorty, who started playing cello at the age of 4, has embraced Chinese music as part of her studies.

Performing pieces with flowing melodies and microtones that differ from Western compositions, she has learned the subtle art of Chinese music.

"Music here allows you to communicate across language barriers. Even when words fail, playing together creates understanding," she said.

"Before I came to China to study at the Tianjin Juilliard, I planned to go back home after graduation. But now, I am thinking about working here," she added.

Apollo Rayme Parish Mitchell, 23, born and raised in San Francisco, shares the same sentiment.

Drawn to Tianjin's historic streets and lively rhythm, Mitchell has immersed himself in both Chinese culture and rigorous musical study. He has attended concerts, explored historic sites in Shanghai and Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and engaged deeply with Chinese musical traditions.

In 2024 and 2025, he also toured with the Tianjin Juilliard Orchestra, with concerts performed in Beijing, Guangzhou of Guangdong province, and Hong Kong.

"Even when language was limited in rehearsals, we communicated through music. It's immediate, visceral, and universal," said Mitchell, who studied with the oboist Mingjia Liu at the school in Tianjin.

"Living here has taught me that music can communicate even when words fall short. That's the real power of what we do," Mitchell said.

Shanghai Quartet basks in memories, plaudits during return tour

By **CHEN NAN**

From April 9 to 19, the Shanghai Quartet embarked on a highly anticipated tour across the United States, performing in Washington DC, Boston, Maine, Florida, and concluding at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York.

Their program was a delicate interplay of Eastern and Western musical traditions, featuring composer Tan Dun's evocative *Feng Ya Song*, Franz Joseph Haydn's *String Quartet in G minor, Op. 74, No. 3,* or *"Rider"*, George Gershwin's *Lullaby*, and Antonin Dvorak's *American Quartet*.

But beyond the music itself, this tour became a poignant reflection on time, mentorship, and the enduring power of cultural exchange.

Formed at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1983 by first violinist Weigang Li and his brother, viola player Honggang Li, the Shanghai Quartet has toured worldwide and joined The Tianjin Juilliard School in the fall of 2021.

The quartet now consists of cellist He Sihao, violinist Yu Xiang and the two founding members.

For second violinist Yu, Boston, the capital of Massachusetts, has always held a special place in his heart. Yu first experienced the Shanghai Quartet as a student at the New England Conservatory, sitting in the audience during a performance of Johannes Brahms' *Piano Quintet* with pianist Hung-Kuan Chen.

It was only his second live encounter with the quartet, the first having been in Shanghai. Years later, Yu returned — not as a student, but as a performer, stepping onto the same Jordan Hall stage at the conservatory as a member of the ensemble he once admired.

The Shanghai Quartet's program elegantly reflected a dialogue between cultures. Tan's *Feng Ya Song* brought contemporary Chinese textures to United States audiences, merging traditional tonalities with modern compositional techniques.

Haydn's *String Quartet in G minor Op. 74, No. 3* and Gershwin's *Lullaby* offered Western classical and US sensibilities.

Czech composer Dvorak's work served as a mirror of cultural exchange. The *American Quartet* was composed in 1893 when Dvorak was in the US, serving as director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York. He was inspired by the music he encountered there, but he composed it through a European classical lens, with the piece a blend of cultural influences.

Joseph Polisi, president emeritus of the Juilliard School, who now serves as its chief China officer, attended the performance, underscoring the deep bonds connecting Chinese and US musical institutions.

Reviewed by Lee Eiseman in The Boston Musical Intelligencer, "angelic" Yu was praised for his inner voice, He and Weigang for matching tones "marvelously", while the young cellist "brought an extravagantly romantic sensibility to the bottom line with the ever-elegant Honggang".

New York, however, carried the weight of history for Weigang who reflected on his journey back to the city. The quartet's New York debut in 1987 launched their international careers.

Weigang said the quartet arrived in the US in August 1985 to continue their music studies. From September 1985 to May 1987, they were enrolled at Northern Illinois University. During that time, the school offered them a remarkable opportunity: their very first performance in New York. The concert took place on March 2, 1987.

"We prepared diligently for that performance. I remember our program included Mozart's *String Quartet No. 19 in C major, K. 465* and *String Quartet No. 3* by Bela Bartok, followed in the second half by Brahms' *String Quartet No. 1, Op. 51, No. 1,*" Weigang recalled.

"Looking back, that concert probably captured the Shanghai Quartet at its finest, just four years after our founding. Oddly enough, when we finished playing, we didn't feel anything extraordinary," he said.

He also fondly remembers that after the concert, a woman in her 50s came backstage, introduced herself as Patricia Winter, and asked a simple question: "Are you looking for a manager?"

"We had never met her before, but her timing was perfect. Naturally, we were very interested, and that marked the beginning of our connection with her, which would become a pivotal part of our career," said Weigang.

In 2020, the Shanghai Quartet members returned to China and began teaching at The Tianjin Juilliard School.

"After living and working in the US for almost 40 years, this is our first performance in New York since returning to develop our careers in China. At the same time, this is also the Shanghai Quartet's first New York appearance with the new lineup featuring Yu Xiang and He Sihao, which makes it especially significant," he said.





Left: Members of the Shanghai Quartet pose for a photo after their performance in Boston, Massachusetts, with Cathy Chan (center), presenter of the concert, on April 10. **Right:** The Shanghai Quartet performs during the concert. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT



Zhao Minghao

New vision for stable, constructive ties

The summit between the leaders of the world's two largest economies on Thursday is widely expected to inject stability into the turbulent world, as both sides agreed to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability.

The new vision is designed to provide strategic guidance for bilateral relations over the next three years and beyond.

The "constructive strategic stability" is interpreted to be a positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, a sound stability with moderate competition, a constant stability with manageable differences, and an enduring stability with promises of peace.

No wonder the meeting between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump will open a new chapter in Sino-US ties.

The goal to make 2026 a historic and landmark year for US-China relations is crucial, as historically, landmark years have typically included events like former US president Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic ties in 1979.

The questions about whether the two countries can overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations need both countries to answer.

Since the beginning of the US leader's second term in office, China-US relations have transitioned from intense tensions — after Washington launched a tariff war — to gradual stabilization.

Both sides need to grasp the precious opportunity presented by the summit to preserve this hard-won stability.

US policymakers have come to realize that China is not as vulnerable as they had once assumed, and that even extreme pressure would not force Beijing to yield.

Despite the repercussions of the tariff war, China remains firmly established as the world's second-largest economy, with its domestic growth and exports showing remarkable resilience.

In 2025, China reported a trade surplus of nearly $1.2 trillion, a 20 percent increase year-on-year. In the first quarter of 2026, China's GDP grew by 5.0 percent year-on-year, calculated at constant prices.

Recent developments prove that Beijing's tactics of "fighting for talks" and "struggling for stability" in its dealings with Washington have been effective.

Some senior US officials have abandoned their previous arrogance and recognized that China is a strong player; making exorbitant demands and bluffing won't work.

In areas such as rare earths, China has continued to strengthen its national economic security system and advance legislation on counter-sanctions and anti-long-arm jurisdiction, thereby enhancing its tool kit for responding to US pressure.

According to an analysis by Bloomberg Economics, approximately 4 percent of US GDP, or about $1.2 trillion, is generated in industries that use rare earths, and most of these industries lack effective alternatives to Chinese suppliers.

The Economist has pointed out that more than a year after the US administration initiated the tariff war, countries around the world are seeking new markets and forging new trade deals, gradually shifting the center of gravity in global trade away from the US.

In contrast, China has remained committed to an open world economy and worked to promote universally beneficial and inclusive globalization.

Starting May 1, China removed tariffs on 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, becoming the first major economy to grant unilateral zero-tariff treatment to Africa.

This move reflects Beijing's willingness to pursue shared development with Global South countries.

China has remained the largest trading partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since 2009, with bilateral trade exceeding 7.55 trillion yuan ($1.11 trillion) in 2025.

Notably, a trilateral cooperation mechanism among ASEAN, China and the Gulf Cooperation Council has been established, leveraging the strengths of all parties to create synergy for win-win development.

Clearly, in a contest defined by openness and certainty, China has gained the upper hand.

Over the past few years, China has notably strengthened its ability to steer Sino-US relations, consistently adhering to the approach of "if forced to fight, China will fight to the end, and for talks, the door is open".

The White House's new National Security Strategy describes China as a "near-peer" and proposes building a "genuinely mutually advantageous economic relationship with Beijing".

Importantly, US public opinion on China is also showing positive signs.

A Pew Research Center poll released in mid-April found that around 27 percent of people in the US hold a favorable view of China, a 6 percentage-point increase from 2025 and double the lowest point recorded in 2023.

Many US residents are skeptical about the effectiveness of confrontational policies such as tariffs and express concern about blowback on the US economy.

Additionally, survey data from Chatham House, an independent London-based policy institute, show that more than half of respondents support their government purchasing China's clean technology products.

Within the US strategic community, there is a growing chorus supporting a pragmatic and flexible approach to Sino-US relations.

Lyle Goldstein, director of the Asia Program at Defense Priorities, a think tank, has argued that the current international context presents an opportunity to stabilize Sino-US ties.

He has even suggested the need for a new political document to establish a model of peaceful coexistence between the two countries — a "fourth joint communiqué".

Deep-seated differences between Beijing and Washington undeniably persist in areas such as the economy, trade, military affairs, and technology.

The Taiwan question — at the core of China's core interests — is the most important issue in Sino-US relations.

If it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability.

Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, Xi said, urging the US side to exercise extra caution in handling the Taiwan question.

In this context, the Xi-Trump summit not only provides an important opportunity for both sides to explore more constructive ways of engagement, fostering conditions for increased face-to-face communication between the two heads of state, but may also prove to be historic if the new vision of Sino-US ties can be heeded and acted on.

This is important for the two countries, the world and humanity.

The author is a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University and a China Forum expert.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Dennis Wilder

Educational bridges vital for two largest economies



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Global Lens

Since joining the faculty at Georgetown University in Washington in 2016, I have been deeply involved in academic exchanges between the United States and China at the university level. Georgetown's connection with China dates back to 1885 when the then US president Grover Cleveland appointed Georgetown alumnus Charles Denby as the US minister to China.

Denby once remarked, "There is no country in the world more underrated than China."

Over the years, Georgetown has proudly welcomed thousands of Chinese students, including Wang Yi, the current director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who spent time as a visiting scholar at the Walsh School of Foreign Service.

As the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university in the US, Georgetown draws inspiration from the legacy of the great Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci. Ricci mastered the Chinese language and became the first European to enter the Forbidden City of Beijing in 1601.

He was invited by the Wanli Emperor, who sought his services in matters such as court astronomy and calendrical science.

One of my favorite ways to introduce Chinese and US students to each other is by asking them how their lives are different from their grandparents'.

Chinese students often recount the vast changes their parents experienced during the reform and opening-up period.

They describe a transition from a more traditional, resource-constrained lifestyle to the modern conveniences of today. Many families had no running water and the only machines they typically had were bicycles and sewing machines.

US students remember that their grandparents had only black-and-white televisions with three channels — ABC, NBC and CBS. Many grandparents had vivid memories of the Vietnam War, with some being veterans of that conflict.

Through these reflections, students can gain a deeper understanding of how different their family heritages are and why they have different perspectives on various issues.

I also ask students what they share in common today.

Not surprisingly, since most of them never let their phones out of their hands, both Chinese and US students emphasize the centrality of social media in their lives.

Living in cyberspace, this generation is not just aware of the trends in their own country, but also of global youth culture.

Indeed, my students, while still citizens of their home countries, are also distinctly a generation of global citizens. They are eager to make a better world and are impatient with the failures of past generations to deal with problems such as climate change and food insecurity in the Global South.

From personal experience, I know that interactions between Chinese and US students can be life-altering.

In 1975, US students could not study in China, so I did the second-best thing.

I applied for the Yale-in-China Program at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. From the rooftop of my dorm in the New Territories in Hong Kong, I could see the Chinese mainland, which I vowed to visit someday.

As a member of the university swimming team, I bonded with a teammate from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

We would spend hours comparing our family histories and hoping that the opening that Chairman Mao Zedong and the then US president Richard Nixon had initiated would flourish.

I never imagined that a few years later, on a cold January morning in 1979, I would stand on the White House lawn as a student representative to witness the ceremonial welcome accorded to the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping by the then US president Jimmy Carter.

Today, I regret that fewer Chinese and US students have the same opportunities to expand their mindsets. The number of US students studying in China and the number of Chinese students studying in the US are both declining.

Although we can initiate virtual dialogues to keep the interaction going, they are not substitutes for the kind of experience that comes only with immersive programs of language and cultural study.

Hopefully the US and Chinese leaders can open the doors wider for academic exchanges to flourish once again, enabling the shared benefit of all humanity.

The author is a senior fellow in the Initiative for US-China Dialogue on Global Issues at Georgetown University. He previously served as the National Security Council's director for China.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Rattan Lal

China and US can partner on soil health for global prosperity

China and the United States may differ in geography, demography and political systems, but in agriculture they share a remarkable distinction: both are global breadbaskets whose success has an impact far beyond their borders.

China, with a population of over 1.4 billion and 129 million hectares of arable land, produced about 724 million tons of food-grain in 2025. The US, with around 350 million people and roughly 150 million hectares of arable land, produced around 546 million tons in 2025. Together, they demonstrate that feeding the world is not merely an economic activity, but also a civilizational achievement through science -based agriculture.

However, the challenge of the 21st century is not simply to produce more food but to do so while restoring the soil health that sustains it.

Agriculture in both countries needs to be transformed from being part of the environmental problem into becoming part of the solution.

This evolution is key to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030. Key agriculture-related SDGs include ending poverty, eliminating hunger, ensuring good health, combating climate change, protecting life on land, strengthening institutions for peace and justice and fostering global partnerships.

Particularly important is the concept of "One Health", which recognizes that the health of soil, plants, animals, people, ecoregions and the planet is interconnected and inseparable.

For this reason, China and the US must cooperate to strengthen agroecosystems and address global challenges. There are a range of strategies that are of common interest for China and the US.

A promising approach is eco-intensification, which applies ecological principles to agriculture instead of relying on the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. The concept focuses on "producing more from less" by enhancing the efficiency of inputs and reducing leakage into the environment.

Global Lens

Fertilizers and pesticides are not enemies of agriculture, but they should be used as supplements or medicine. Their indiscriminate use makes them poisonous. The difference between poison and medicine is the dose, formulation, timing and method of application.

For this reason, China and the US must cooperate to strengthen agroecosystems and address global challenges.

The world must also get over the outdated obsession with high yields. Adopting nutrition-sensitive agriculture is more important than harvesting record yields.

Dietary diversity and complex farming and cropping systems can alleviate malnutrition and hidden hunger problems not only in China and the US but also around the world.

In addition, greater attention should be given to so-called "forgotten" or "orphan" crops that were largely marginalized by the Green Revolution of the 1960s which focused on rice, wheat and corn.

The emphasis should be on growing diverse crops of native origin such as sorghum, millet, cowpeas, beans, pulses and root crops. They require less water, tolerate climatic stress and enrich soils naturally through biological processes.

Equally important is the re-carbonization of soils and terrestrial agroecosystems by capturing atmospheric carbon dioxide and storing it in soil, trees and other landscape units.

The organic matter content in soils should be 2 to 3 percent in the root zone.

However, most soils of the agroecosystems in China and the US have lost their soil organic matter stock due to excessive plowing, accelerated soil erosion and extractive farming practices. Re-carbonization of the soil is a win-win strategy because it mitigates climate change, restores soil and environmental health and boosts biodiversity above and below the ground.

Soils can also be viewed metaphorically as a "bank", with carbon as its currency. This requires continuous deposition of carbonaceous biomass — such as compost, manure and crop residue mulch — at rates exceeding losses from decomposition, respiration, soil erosion and leaching.

To increase carbon stocks in this "soil bank", the deposits must consistently exceed the withdrawals.

From a policy perspective, it is also important to move beyond traditional subsidies and instead pay land managers for providing key ecosystem services through the adoption of best management practices.

Until the carbon market develops for trading carbon credits, it is important to pay farmers for carbon sequestration in soil and trees. The rate of payments must be equivalent to the social value of soil carbon which may be equal to $50 per credit, or the equivalent of one metric ton of carbon dioxide computed by converting methane and nitrous oxide into carbon dioxide.

At the institutional level, a stronger soil protection policy is needed to safeguard the finite and irreplaceable soil resources. Some agricultural land in China and the US is being converted to urban and industrial uses. Prime agricultural land must be mapped and designated as protected against urbanization and other uses. Prime soil must be saved for future generations.

Education reform is also essential. The curricula in schools should include soil and environmental health education at all levels.

It is important to attract the best and the brightest to study agriculture, soil sciences and environmental conservation at an early age. Even children's alphabet books must be soil and environment-oriented.

Beyond production systems, saving land and water for nature should become a guiding principle, supported by dietary choices that promote planetary health, reductions in food waste, and the return of agriculturally marginal lands to natural ecosystems. The objective is to live in harmony with nature rather than dominate and exploit it.

Ultimately, the restoration of soil health is critical for sustaining terrestrial life. Access to adequate, healthy and nutritious food is essential for human well-being. An empty stomach leads to violence, civil strife, political unrest and war.

War and hunger are both human-made tragedies that must be tackled urgently. While war destroys soil and its life-support system, peace restores soil health.

In that sense, science-based and nutrition-sensitive agriculture is the foundation of long-lasting peace and tranquility in the world. Let us therefore promote the food-energy-water-soil nexus for human well-being and living in harmony with nature.

The author is the laureate of the 2020 World Food Prize and 2024 Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity and is a Distinguished University Professor of soil sciences at Ohio State University.
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SINO-US SUMMIT

JIN ZHEN

Substantial ballast

The stock of China-US cooperation accumulated over many years remains substantial, deeply rooted and resilient



In discussing today's relations between China and the United States, an important reality should not be overlooked: The stock of bilateral cooperation accumulated over many years remains substantial, deeply rooted and resilient. This is reflected in economic and trade exchanges, subnational engagement, corporate presence and global governance collaboration. These long-standing economic ties serve as a key pillar of the bilateral relationship. The weight of China-US economic ties is evident in their sheer scale and deep integration. The economic relationship is mutually beneficial and win-win in nature, just as President Xi Jinping pointed out when holding talks with US President Donald Trump in Beijing on Thursday.

According to China's General Administration of Customs, the country's total imports and exports with the US reached 4.01 trillion yuan ($590.5 billion) in 2025, accounting for 8.8 percent of its total foreign trade value. Based on US statistics, in the first 10 months of 2025, the US' total imports and exports with China stood at $373.64 billion, representing 7.8 percent of the US' total foreign trade value. China counts as the US' third-largest partner for both exports and imports, while the US is China's top goods export market and its third-largest import source.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Early 2026 has evidenced some changes in China's trade structure. China's General Administration of Customs data released in May showed that in the January-April period, China-US trade totaled 1.25 trillion yuan, a 12.9 percent drop year-on-year, while China's trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership grew over that period. This suggests that China is diversifying its trade ties and building a more balanced mix of partners, which will boost its resilience to external shocks.

But China's diversifying market footprint does not mean its cooperation with the US is becoming less important. Beijing has consistently called for stable and mutually beneficial economic exchanges. Even under maximum external pressure and high tariff rates, two-way trade held above the trillion-yuan mark — a sign of the deep complementarity between the two economies. Their economic ties — spanning consumer markets, manufacturing systems, supply chains and the industrial division of labor — are not easily replaceable in the short term.

Over the longer term, China-US economic and trade relations have transcended simple commodity transactions. US companies remain deeply embedded in China's market, while key segments of Chinese supply chains have forged long-term synergies with the US market. This decades-old cooperation network has become an integral part of the economic fabric of both countries.

Despite periodic fluctuations in China-US relations, local exchanges and business cooperation have remained resilient, acting as a stabilizing force in the relationship. As of August 2025, China and the US had established 288 pairs of sister provinces/states and sister cities, covering large populations and economically vibrant regions in both countries. In April this year, Shenzhen's Nanshan district and Tacoma, Washington, held their first in-person exchange event since establishing a friendly city partnership. Participants in the Ping-Pong Diplomacy 55 years ago took up their bats once again. Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said on social media platform that 55 years later, the friendship continues to thrive, and grow across generations.

The corporate side tells a similar story. According to the US-China Business Council's 2025 Member Survey, almost all the surveyed companies recognize that they cannot remain globally competitive without their China operations.

In April this year, the US-China Business Council led its largest and most broadly representative delegation to visit Guangzhou and Shenzhen, with dozens of companies making up the delegation.

Meanwhile, the 2026 Special Report on the State of Business in South China, released by the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, also revealed that 95 percent of participating companies report a commitment to maintaining their operations in China.

Beneath the surface, this reflects the logic of market dynamics and the pragmatic choices of enterprises. China's vast market, complete industrial system, mature supply chains and continuous opening-up have long held strong appeal for multinationals. The brand influence, local partnership networks and industrial footprint many US companies have built here are pivotal cooperative assets in bilateral relations.

The existing stock of bilateral cooperation also manifests in the two sides' governance capacity, industrial strengths and technological edge. As the world's two largest economies, the two nations have major influence over global issues spanning climate change, artificial intelligence, public health and financial stability. Few of these challenges can be addressed by either side alone. Maintaining sound bilateral coordination will add greater certainty to the global landscape.

The energy sector best exemplifies this dynamic. Though the US is now refocusing on fossil fuels, energy independence and a revival of traditional manufacturing, it retains clear strengths in energy technology, green finance, grid modernization and energy storage. AI advances are also driving up US power demand.

China, for its part, is in a critical energy transition phase during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. It has formed a complete industry chain and secured economies of scale across photovoltaics, power batteries, electric vehicles and the wider green supply chain. Should both sides maintain long-term cooperation in specific areas such as energy storage, power grids, energy efficiency and green investment, their respective strengths can fuel the global green transition.

The same holds true in the AI domain. Both China and the US stand as key players in global tech innovation, boasting strong research capabilities, enormous markets and abundant application scenarios. Challenges brought by this technology — including energy consumption, data security, technology misuse and standards alignment — have gone beyond any single country's capacity to address. Maintaining necessary communication amid competition and exploring cooperation on technological security, risk prevention and regulatory coordination serve both sides' interests and help mitigate risks in global tech governance.

Global governance is evolving into a far more complex era. The more complicated global challenges become, the more major powers should step up to shoulder responsibilities; the further technological influences extend, the more imperative it is for leading innovators to enhance coordination.

China and the US each boast comparative advantages. By leveraging their respective endowments to scale up cooperation, the two can deliver tangible global public goods and unlock new space for bilateral collaboration.

The author is an assistant research fellow at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CAI CUIHONG

Shared safety responsibility

Sino-US cooperation is crucial for developing the practical guardrails that are imperative in a world in which AI races and risks are increasingly intertwined



As the development of artificial intelligence reshapes industries, intensifies corporate competition and creates shared risks, building guardrails and setting credible rules and public-safety foundations for technological development are global responsibilities shared by China and the United States.

In today's AI landscape, the US still holds a comparative advantage in multiple fields. That advantage is reflected not only in the continued release of frontier models by companies such as OpenAI, Google, Anthropic and Meta, but also in advanced GPUs, cloud platforms, foundational software, model-evaluation systems, standards bodies, alliance networks and the ability to export a global technology stack. Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report shows that in 2025, US institutions produced 59 notable AI models, compared with 35 from China. The US remains the leading force in frontier model innovation, computing ecosystems and platform capacity, and it is increasingly converting these technological edges into rule-shaping power.

China, however, boasts its own advantages instead of playing catch-up. China possesses a vast domestic market, rich industrial applications, a complete manufacturing base, strong engineering and deployment capacity, a fast-growing open-source ecosystem and significant room for digital cooperation with other Global South countries. The Stanford report shows that China ranks first worldwide in AI paper output, citations and granted patents, reflecting deep research accumulation and a sustained innovation base. In recent years, China has advanced its "AI Plus" initiative, accelerating AI adoption in manufacturing, healthcare, education, transportation and urban governance, while expanding access through open-source models and low-cost deployment. China's strength does not lie in a single frontier breakthrough; it lies in application, implementation, cost efficiency and the ability to translate technology into industrial capacity.

This is why China-US AI relations cannot be reduced to a simple choice between cooperation and confrontation. The US is unlikely to loosen its grip on key technology chains, frontier model ecosystems or international rule-setting power. China, for its part, will not accept being folded passively into risk-assessment, technology-review or compliance frameworks defined unilaterally by the US. Acknowledging competition is not a rejection of cooperation. It is the necessary starting point for any serious cooperative governance effort.

AI needs governance guardrails because its pervasive reach magnifies the costs of competition. Even when traditional technologies have strategic significance, their impact often remains concentrated in specific sectors or dimensions of national power. Once AI is widely deployed, however, it will be embedded in products, services, manufacturing processes, infrastructure and daily life. In this context, without a basic framework of trust between China and the US, trade in AI-enabled products, technological cooperation and industrial ties could all be consumed by security concerns, while the lack of trust would directly impede industrial cooperation and the functioning of global markets.

AI also creates threats that neither country can manage alone. In a recent column, Thomas Friedman argued that the new common threat facing the US and China is not another state, but the risk created by "the malign uses of artificial intelligence". Agentic AI, automated hacking tools and deepfake systems could give "small, malign actors" destructive capabilities once available only to states. They could launch cyberattacks, spread false information, manipulate public perception and disrupt critical infrastructure at far lower cost. Autonomous weapons, unmanned systems and automated military decision-making could also heighten the risk of miscalculation, loss of control and crisis escalation. These dangers do not respect geopolitical blocs. Both countries are potential targets.

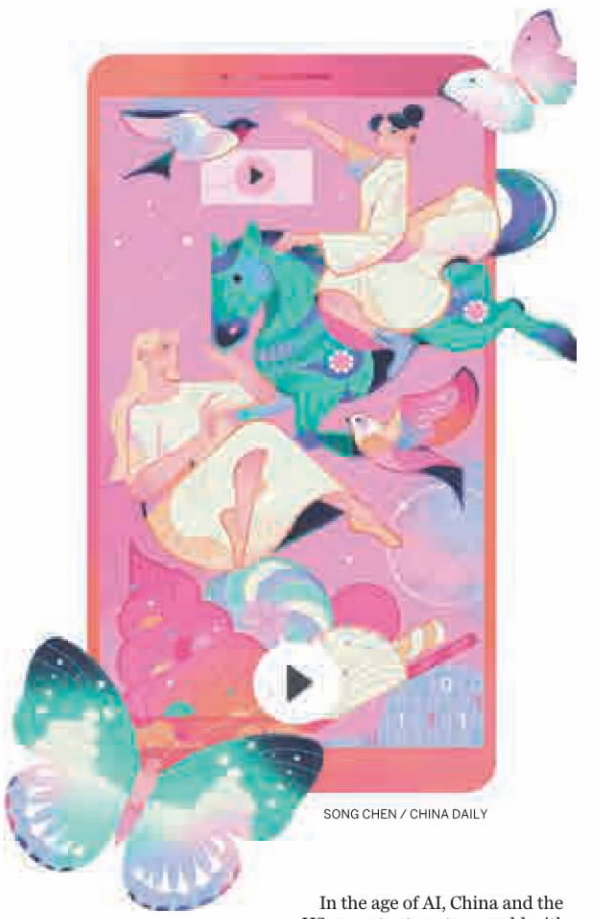
Compounding these risks is a serious governance lag. Model capabilities, agentic behavior, autonomous decision-making, content generation and algorithmic integration are advancing faster than rules can be written. Many risks will not be visible at the moment of invention; they will emerge only through deployment at scale and cross-border diffusion. That is the deeper paradox of China-US AI competition: the harder each side tries to secure itself through technological advantage, the more insecurity both may create if there is a lack of shared guardrails.

Guardrails mean creating mechanisms — risk alerts, incident reporting, interoperable technical standards, crisis communication and boundaries around high-risk uses — to prevent AI competition from sliding into miscalculation, loss of control or systemic risk. Such guardrails should rest on three principles: reciprocity, boundaries and openness.

First, cooperation should be reciprocal. Washington and Beijing can exchange views on risk classification, safety-incident reporting, model-evaluation methods, red-teaming, deepfake detection and content provenance. These are areas with clear public-safety implications and some room for technical consensus. AI governance cannot become a process in which one side writes the standards and the other submits to inspection. China can support interoperable evaluation formats, shared risk terminology and exchanges on testing methods. It cannot accept one country's unilateral testing results as the equivalent of international compliance standards, nor should safety evaluation become a pretext for intrusive audits of model weights, training data or core engineering parameters.

Second, cooperation should also have boundaries. The purpose of guardrails is to prevent risks from spiraling out of control, not to create new technology barriers. The two countries can discuss high-risk issues such as cyberattacks, AI-enabled fraud, loss of control in autonomous systems, critical-infrastructure protection and AI-related red lines in nuclear command. They can also explore mechanisms for incident reporting, crisis communication and early warning. But AI security should not become an all-purpose justification for securitizing civilian AI, open-source models, cloud services, scientific exchange or talent mobility. If governance is over-securitized, the space for cooperation will shrink and global AI development will become artificially fragmented.

Third, governance can remain open. Global AI governance cannot become a closed club of a few technological powers. The United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Organization for Standardization, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and some Global South platforms all have roles to play. Countries in the Global South should not be mere rule-takers; they should be participants in, and beneficiaries of, AI governance. The US, China and other major AI-capable actors should work together to help developing countries close the gaps in computing power, data, talent and infrastructure. Through open-source tools, low-cost deployment, training programs, compliance templates and applications that serve basic development needs, they can help ensure that AI truly serves development and creates replicable public goods in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, education, disaster warning and edge AI.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

In the age of AI, China and the US cannot return to a world without competition, nor can they accept competition without guardrails. Both countries can build a consensus on the basis of reciprocity, prevent risks from spiraling out of control within clear boundaries, and expand cooperation through open governance, thereby providing a more stable and secure foundation for global AI development.

The author is a professor of international relations at the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University and the deputy director of the Center for Global AI Innovative Governance. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Tourists enjoy a "dragon-of-boats" tour on the Salt Lake in Yuncheng city in southeastern Shanxi.
LAN LIQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Host of beauty spots and historical sites teems with visitors from across the country



Tourists visit the famed Guanque Tower — or Stork Tower — in Yongji city on May 3. CHENG YONGREN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Peony flowers bloom at Yongzuo Temple — or Twin Pagodas Park — in Taiyuan during the May Day holiday.
ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY

TOURISM BOOMS IN SHANXI DURING MAY DAY HOLIDAY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

During the May Day holiday, spanning from May 1 to 5, the North China province of Shanxi again welcomed a great number of tourists.

Tourists to Shanxi were offered impressive experiences thanks to local practices that integrate natural wonders with cultural and historical assets, as well as enriched offerings such as camping, cycling, boating and other sports and cultural activities.

Nanzhai Park in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, for instance, has a dedicated camping site for tourists from both Shanxi and the rest of the country.

Wang Youpeng, a resident in Taiyuan, arrived at the campsite before 9 am on May 2. With the help of his family members, a tent was set up in the leafy shade, with a hammock strung between two willow trees nearby.

"We are pleased with this site," Wang said. "There is free parking, drinking water and toilets — the services and facilities are complete."

"My child loved this place very much," he said. "As it is located along a flowing stream, he could feed ducks and geese here." Wang said his family planned to stay in the park for a whole day. "This is a perfect place for my child to get close to nature."

Prior to the May Day holiday, Taiyuan's tourism authorities recommended nine traveling options for tourists and camping was one of them. These camping sites also include the Xishan Ecological Park and the scenic area along the Fenhe River.



Visitors attend a pop music show at Taiyuan's Bell Tower Street during the May Day holiday. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tourists can take a boating tour of the lake in Taiyuan's Jinci Park.
LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



An open-air market is held in the county of Quwo during the May Day holiday. YAN RUIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Cycling tours

Cycling tours were also popular among not only local tourists in Taiyuan but travelers from the rest of the country because shared bicycles are easily available.

In mid-April, Wang Wenbin, China's ambassador to Cambodia, recommended Taiyuan's cycling trails on his overseas social media account.

A short video showed people cycling along two trails by the Fenhe River. "The cycling trails are just like two silk ribbons in the sea of trees and flowers," he wrote.

The two trails, with a total length of 88 kilometers, connect 16 Fenhe River bridges and 11 riverside viewpoints, and were opened to the public on May 1, 2021.

"We made a cycling tour along the trails again because of Ambassador Wang's recommendation," said a Taiyuan resident surnamed Zhang. "In the past, we were proud of such Taiyuan landmarks as Jinci Temple and Tianlongshan Grottoes. Now we are pleased to see the addition of the Fenhe River cycling trails, which are a grand showcase of the ecological improvements of the river and the city."

The cycling trails are part of the Fenhe River scenic area, which was developed over several decades.

The Fenhe River, the second-longest river in Shanxi, flows through Taiyuan for 188 km. For thousands of years, the river has irrigated the land and nurtured the people of Taiyuan.

With enhanced governance and ecological restoration, the water quality of the Fenhe River has improved significantly, restoring much of its former beauty.

Hundreds of types of trees and flowers have been planted in the Fenhe River scenic area along the riverbanks, and dozens of cultural attractions have been laid out. The area offers a habitat for hundreds of bird species and has become a destination for tourists and a place for locals to relax.

Yuncheng Salt Lake

During the May Day holiday, various water sports and entertainment activities throughout Shanxi also attracted a great number of tourists.

In the southeastern Shanxi city of Yuncheng, for instance, many tourists were offered an opportunity to take part in a "dragon-of-boats" tour on the famed Yuncheng Salt Lake.

When evening approached, dozens of tourists boarded several illuminated boats, which were connected in a chain to form a "dragon". While those on board had an impressive view of the lake and the city, the boats, with their lights reflected on the water, presented a spectacular sight for people on the shore.

Zhang Lei, an executive at the Yuncheng Salt Lake Scenic Area, said the boat tour is a highlight of the city's tourism industry. "With this new option, we aim for tourists to have a new experience of the beauty of the lake."

Covering an area of 132 square kilometers, Yuncheng Salt Lake is one of the three famed inland lakes with sodium sulfate in the world.

Serving as a salt production base for about 4,600 years, the lake has become a tourist destination in Shanxi province over the past few decades.

The local tourism industry highlights both the historical tradition of salt mining and innovative scenarios, meeting the taste of modern tourists.

In summer, experiencing floating on the surface of this lake, known as the Chinese version of the Dead Sea, is an unforgettable experience that one cannot find elsewhere in the country.

In recent years, the lake has again become a hit on social media because of eye-catching aerial photos of its colorful surface. As temperatures begin to rise in early summer, the multicolored lake becomes a busy attraction for tourists and photographers.

The lake is also a habitat for birds and other wildlife species. More than 200 bird species have been recorded in recent years, including such rare varieties as flamingo, swan, pied avocet and great bustard, according to local environmental officials.



Tourists watch a folk dance in the ancient city of Shuozhou on May 1. LI XIAOLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Historical assets revived

In Shanxi, a great number of historical and cultural assets — especially ancient buildings and relics — are at the top of every tourist's agenda.

During this year's May Day holiday, tourists' expectations to explore these places were better met with the use of various shows and high-tech means.

In Taiyuan's Yongzuo Temple, which is known for two landmark pagodas built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the 2026 Taiyuan Twin Pagodas Peony Cultural Month opened on April 25 and will last for about four weeks.

During the holiday, tourists were offered an opportunity to see the 8,000-plus peony plants blooming at the temple. Among them are seven rare peony trees named Zixiaxian. Each of them is more than 400 years old, dating back to the period when the pagodas were built.

Surrounding the Zixiaxian trees, a variety of shows including a *hanfu* show, traditional dances, poem recitals and an intangible cultural heritage fair were staged.

The show of *hanfu*, or ancient Chinese garments, attracted the attention of many tourists. Donning ancient *hanfu*, performers danced to the melodies of a concert of Chinese musical instruments including *guzheng*, *guqin* and *pipa*, helping tourists see what rituals looked like more than 400 years ago.

Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in the northern Shanxi city of Datong, again welcomed a peak tourist flow during the May Day holiday.

After a tight day's schedule touring Yungang and the ancient city of Datong, a tourist surnamed Chen, who was from Shanghai, joined a crowd of people in a square near the eastern city wall. They were waiting for the opening of a light-rendered sculpture show titled The Light of Yungang Grottoes.

In the evening, the show started with images of Buddha statues, musical instrument-playing figurines and lotus patterns commonly seen in the grottoes projected onto the city wall. These were accompanied with words explaining the details of the artistic works and stories about the history. "The show offered us a perfect review of what we saw in the day," Chen said.

Yungang Grottoes, with construction starting in the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), represents the highest level of Buddhist cave art, along with such famed sites as Mogao in Dunhuang, Gansu province, and Longmen in Luoyang, Henan province. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001.

"This show, leveraging modern digital technologies and a novel narrative style, presented vivid stories about what makes Yungang a cultural landmark and Datong an enticing tourist attraction," Chen said.

New options

During the May Day holiday, while presenting its ancient cultural legacy, Shanxi had other options on offer to meet the modern tastes of tourists.

On May 3, for instance, a singing show featuring Chinese singer Joker Xue was held at Taiyuan Sports Center. It attracted tens of thousands of people from across the country.

According to an official at the Taiyuan culture and tourism bureau, the "performance economy" is an emerging engine driving the growth of local tourism and consumption.

The bureau's latest information shows that it has issued licenses for 27 large-scale performing shows for 2026, with the number of audience members expected to surpass 700,000.

It anticipated that there will be more than 40 such shows this year, which are expected to draw about 1.2 million visitors in total.

In addition to large-scale, licensed performances, smaller-scale shows were held at various locations in Shanxi during the holiday.

On May 5, the last day of the public holiday, Bell Tower Street in Taiyuan welcomed flocks of visitors. They were there to hear an open-air concert featuring traditional Chinese musical instruments. The event was held in a more informal manner — people stood on the street or moved among food stalls, tasting some local snacks while listening to the music.

Bell Tower Street is a site in Taiyuan where people can experience both local culture and life, while exploring history.

Also known as Zhonglou Street, it is named after a bell tower built during the Ming Dynasty. It has been a commercial market for more than a century.

Bell Tower Street has a lot of historical buildings, including the Dazhong Temple and Kaihua Temple, both of which were originally built during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Local authorities have been making efforts to restore and protect important historical buildings and relics along the street.

The street was renovated in 2017 and reopened to the public in 2021 with a new look. It features many cultural relics, ancient buildings and time-honored brands.

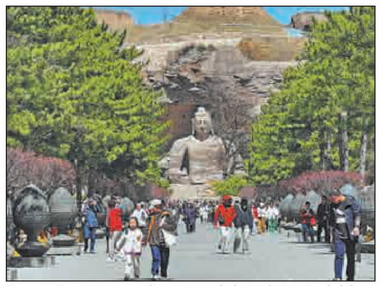
After its renovation, this 700-meter-long street saw many new stores retaining their ancient architecture. What's more, many modern leisure spots, such as restaurants, bars, exhibition areas and tourist facilities were created, lending the area a sense of dynamism.

Many local specialties and handicrafts can be found on the street, like dough carvings, mature vinegar, paper-cuttings and more. Visitors can watch craftsmen create various paste figurines with their bare hands. Meanwhile, local mature vinegar, which is one of the famous Chinese varieties and a perfect match for noodles and dumplings, is something that foodies cannot afford to miss.

As a landmark, the upgraded Bell Tower Street boasts a perfect combination of ancient and modern elements, showcasing local history and culture. Its unique charm and relaxing vibe attract many visitors every year to explore the area.

Local statistics show that the street received about 152,000 visits on May 2, a record number.

Zhang Qi contributed to this story.



Yungang Grottoes attract peak tourist crowds during the May Day holiday.
LI PEIJING / FOR CHINA DAILY



People camp at Nanzhai Park in Taiyuan on May 4. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY



A poster of *A Date with Taiyuan*, a series of plays featuring Taiyuan's tourist attractions as backdrops. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ADVERTORIAL

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COMMENT

Editorials

New vision for constructive relationship of strategic stability should guide Sino-US ties

The meeting between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump in Beijing this week will help the two sides jointly answer the defining questions facing China-US relations — questions posed by history, by the world and by the peoples of both countries.

The new vision for building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability agreed by the two leaders shows how the two nations can answer the questions of whether China and the United States can overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations.

As Xi stressed, the "constructive strategic stability" should be a positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, a sound stability with moderate competition, a constant stability with manageable differences, and an enduring stability with promises of peace.

That vision will provide strategic guidance for bilateral relations over the next three years and beyond, and should be welcomed by the people of both countries as well as the international community, as Xi said.

The China-US relationship involves multiple dimensions, including politics, economy, trade, security and people-to-people exchanges. The new vision for relations is pertinent to the practical needs of the development of Sino-US relations in the new era.

The building of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability should not be a mere slogan, but concrete action taken by both sides toward the same goal.

The vision can help the two sides explore more practical frameworks to implement the consensus reached in the head-of-state diplomacy, transforming initiatives and agreements into actions and results. This would enable them to more effectively build common ground, expand areas of converging interests and manage differences.

China stands ready to work with the US to turn the new vision for their relations into concrete, joint actions, and to jointly foster stable, healthy, and sustainable development in bilateral ties, as a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry stressed at a news conference on Thursday.

History has shown that China-US economic ties are mutually beneficial and win-win in nature. Differences should not be allowed to define the overall relationship. Given the size of the two economies, their different stages of development and differing national conditions, disagreements and frictions are natural. What matters is that the two sides address them through equal-footed consultation, the only correct path toward resolving differences and maintaining stable bilateral relations.

That the economic and trade teams of the two countries produced generally balanced and positive outcomes in the latest round of bilateral trade talks in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday is a testament to this, and the two sides should strive to sustain the good momentum they have worked hard to create.

China's pursuit of high-quality development, its commitment to high-standard opening-up and the vast potential of its economy and market help explain the willingness of US businesses to deepen cooperation with China. This underscores a broader reality: mutually beneficial cooperation remains the shared aspiration on both sides.

The productive exchanges between the US business delegation led by Trump and the Chinese side during the visit demonstrate that both countries possess not only the capacity, but also the sincerity, to translate China-US economic and trade cooperation into more tangible benefits for their two peoples.

Yet realizing the new vision will require both countries to fully respect each other's core concerns and legitimate interests. In particular, the US side should exercise due prudence, and refrain from crossing the red line on the Taiwan question.

As Xi emphasized, the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations, and if it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy.

Safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait constitutes the greatest common denominator between China and the US. If the US side truly seeks peace across the Strait, it should stop sending wrong signals to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces on the Chinese island, as "Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are fundamentally irreconcilable.

Whether 2026 can become a historic and landmark year for the world's most consequential bilateral relationship will depend on whether the US is prepared to meet China halfway and work toward shared objectives. The world's two largest economies have far more common interests than differences. They should be partners that help each other succeed and prosper together.

EU must heed Beijing's stern warning

China regards the European Union as a key partner willing to uphold multilateralism and free trade. However, this perspective is now facing challenges due to the European Commission's multiple unilateral restrictive policies, bills and sanctions that mainly target China.

A recent strongly-worded statement from a Chinese diplomat in Madrid cautioned that the EU's planned investment restrictions might compel China to "close its doors" to EU companies. The recent EU protectionist actions have prompted China to review its economic relations with the bloc.

Speaking in an unusually straightforward tone, Qu Xun, a diplomat at China's embassy in Spain, said that the "controls, limitations, and sanctions" introduced by the European Commission toward China in the past three months have pushed China into a corner, leaving it with no option but to close the door if it persists with its protectionism.

To a large extent, the catalyst for this blunt message was the EU's proposed Industrial Accelerator Act and the revision of its Cybersecurity Act. The IAA seeks to impose onerous restrictions on foreign investment in strategic sectors with the goal of reducing dependence on so-called "subsidized" imports from China.

Likewise, the EU's plan to revise its Cybersecurity Act also targets China by proposing to enforce strict controls on EU ownership in critical industries and limit "high-risk" cybersecurity suppliers, identified as primarily Chinese by the European Commission. These actions indicate that the EU's restrictive measures have shifted from targeting specific Chinese companies to broad legal and regulatory barriers targeting Chinese companies and investments.

In the past few months, China's Ministry of Commerce has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the EU's politicization and over-securitization of trade and economic issues and its discriminatory treatment of Chinese enterprises.

Aside from that, Beijing has been remarkably patient. It has urged settling differences through dialogue and negotiation. However, its patience is wearing thin. The rare warning of the Chinese diplomat that it will "close the door" is a signal that if the EU proceeds with this discriminatory legislation, Beijing will have no choice but to fight back.

The European Commission's approach contradicts its commitment to openness and the genuine needs of the bloc. As an open economy, the EU should offer a nondiscriminatory business environment. However, its executive arm's actions have erected barriers, which undermine this goal and will ultimately harm the EU's own interests. Weakening economic ties with the Chinese market is detrimental to the currently sluggish EU economy and the bloc's long-term competitiveness.

The EU's anxiety over its competitiveness has prompted calls for "de-risking" based on the misguided perception that China is a "rival".

But the market tells a different story. In the face of a complex geopolitical environment, European companies have embraced the "in China, for China" strategy, expanding their investments and deepening technological innovation collaborations with Chinese enterprises. This partnership has not only enhanced the global competitiveness of European and Chinese companies but also revived and upgraded European manufacturing, creating a win-win scenario for both sides.

The European Commission can continue along the protectionist path it is taking under the illusion that it can isolate the EU from Chinese competition while retaining Chinese cooperation. Or it can listen to the concerns of both China and the EU's own pragmatic member states and business community, drop the stigmatizing "high-risk" label it is pinning on Chinese enterprises and investments, and engage with China on the basis of mutual respect and nondiscrimination.

It is hoped that the EU will approach economic competition and exchanges with China in an objective and rational manner, acknowledging the necessity and significance of maintaining stable economic and trade relations.

The stern warning issued by the Chinese side should be taken seriously.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

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

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 692 0900 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Consumption, production data reflect rise up the value chain

China's April inflation data tell two stories. The first is that consumer prices are again rising modestly, and factory-gate prices have returned to positive territory. The second, more important, story is structural: China is shifting from an export-and-investment growth model toward one driven by domestic demand, technological upgrading and industrial resilience, all while navigating a very harsh global environment.

That makes April's consumer price index and producer price index figures more significant than they might first appear.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's CPI rose 1.2 percent year-on-year in April, while the PPI climbed 2.8 percent, marking the strongest factory-gate price hike in nearly four years.

Viewed from China's perspective, April's data reflect a positive change, as the composition of the numbers matters.

Consumer inflation remains relatively subdued and manageable. Food prices continued to decline, while core inflation stayed stable. The more remarkable movement came from producer prices, driven partly by rising global energy and commodity costs, but also by stronger demand in advanced manufacturing sectors such as nonferrous metals, high-end equipment and computing-power-related industries.

That distinction is crucial because it reveals how China's economy is evolving. The growth impulses are increasingly concentrated in sectors of strategic importance: artificial intelligence infrastructure, green technology, advanced manufacturing and industrial upgrading.

Overseas, China's industrial policy is often portrayed as merely a supply-side story. But Beijing's longer-term strategy is not simply about producing more goods. It is about climbing the value chain while simultaneously building a larger and more resilient domestic consumer market.

Recent policy discussions in China increasingly emphasize the creation of a "new balance" between supply and demand. The old model relied heavily on property investment, local government borrowing and low-cost exports. The new one aims to strengthen household consumption, technological self-sufficiency and middle-income purchasing power.

That transition is crucial.

In the short term, China still needs to boost confidence in parts of the private sector, and ease lingering pressure in real estate and external uncertainty stemming from geopolitical tensions and trade frictions. Some of April's producer-price rebound was clearly imported through higher global energy costs linked to instability in the Middle East. But focusing only on those pressures misses the broader transformation underway.

Chinese policymakers are now more focused on improving the quality of growth rather than merely maximizing headline expansion.

This helps explain why the official discourse has increasingly stressed high-quality development, technological upgrading and domestic demand. The goal is to create a more internally sustainable economic system that is less vulnerable to external shocks, sanctions and geopolitical fragmentation.

There is also a larger global implication here. As the country moves into higher-end production and cleaner energy systems, it may become an exporter of industrial upgrades and technological advancements.

That shift might unsettle some Western economies already struggling with deindustrialization and stagnant productivity. Yet it also reflects a deeper reality: the age of hyper-globalization built on cheap Chinese labor, land, raw materials and environmental factors is ending. China is no longer merely the world's factory floor. It is trying to become something much more complex — a technologically advanced continental economy with its own consumer base, industrial ecosystem and strategic autonomy.

This transition will not be easy. Structural problems remain obvious, and global demand conditions are fragile. However, the April figures suggest that China's economy is gradually moving away from the deflationary psychology that has worried some policymakers for much of the past two years.

In an era when much of the world economy feels trapped between inflation, stagnation and geopolitical fragmentation, that alone is worth paying attention to.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Knowledge-intensive services key growth driver

Editor's note: *The service sector in China is a key pillar of high-quality economic development. Li Jun, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Trade in Services, spoke to the 21st Century Business Herald on why China is focusing on its service sector. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The service sector, especially producer services and knowledge-intensive services, has become a key driver of high-quality development.

As the middle-income group expands, the demand for high-quality services such as education, healthcare, culture, elderly care, tourism and sports is rapidly growing. Efforts to expand the capacity and improve the quality of services are essentially aimed at restructuring domestic supply and making consumption a genuine driver of economic growth.

Global value chains are being reshaped. Trade in services has emerged as a competitive international arena. Developed economies in Europe and North America have long dominated these global value chains due to their strengths in the service sector.

China, however, has a large deficit in trade in services, which represents both a weakness and an opportunity for growth. The country needs to strengthen its service sector to foster a new development pattern and boost its competitiveness.

Currently, a core theme of China's industrial policies is integrating advanced manufacturing with modern services. A challenge is that the two sectors have long been governed by different policies, statistical methods and regulatory frameworks, creating barriers to integration.

To overcome these barriers, efforts are required to utilize the industrial internet to connect data silos. It is necessary to accelerate the cloud migration of manufacturers' data on production, equipment and orders and attract service companies to develop services tailored to specific needs based on such data.

Statistical standards also need to be improved. Currently, service departments of manufacturing companies, such as R&D, design and logistics, are still classified under the manufacturing sector. This underestimates the scale of the service sector and limits its ability to benefit from favorable policies.

Additionally, manufacturing companies should be given more support to transition from merely providing products to also offering services and solutions. The global service industry is undergoing an important change, with artificial intelligence and the green economy driving trade in services. This presents a strategic opportunity for China to boost its trade in services.

The green transition has led to the emergence of a range of new businesses. Global market demand for services such as carbon verification, carbon asset management and environmental, social and governance consulting is expanding rapidly. China can leverage its experience in new energy, energy storage and green building by exporting green services.

Artificial intelligence is transforming trade in services by reducing the marginal cost of knowledge-intensive services, and making it easier for companies to offer services that used to be highly demanding for providers. This transition has empowered small and medium-sized Chinese companies to export their services globally.

More importantly, China is exporting AI technology, such as large AI models and intelligent applications. These goods will be key growth drivers of knowledge-intensive service exports during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

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BUSINESS

A shares seen as promising despite pullback

Thursday mkt adjustments not altering mid-term upward trend, experts say

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

While the A-share market underwent some adjustments on Thursday, experts are still upbeat on the A-share market performance in the following months, which is supported by China's continued industrial restructuring and economic recovery.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index shed 1.52 percent to close at 4177.92 points on Thursday, while the Shenzhen Component Index dropped 2.14 percent. Trading remained active, with total trading value of the three major exchanges topping 3 trillion yuan ($442 billion) for the seventh consecutive trading day.

Experts from China International Capital Corp Ltd said they are firmly confident of an upward trend in the A-share market in the mid-term, though fluctuations may be unavoidable. The country's stability amid global uncertainties and China's industrial innovation will serve as the core drivers, they said.

Xia Fanjie, a strategist at China Securities, said that a slow bull market driven by structural opportunities will typify A-share market performance in the second half.

Rising demand for computing power will be a major theme, as it is still too early to declare a bubble in the sector. Investors are recommended to look for opportunities in sectors of optical modules, printed circuit boards, advanced packaging, memory chips, liquid cooling and heat dissipation, data center power supply, computer power leasing and cloud services, Xia said.

Economic recovery is another major reason for a positive outlook on the A-share market in the coming months. The producer price index is expected to recover on a quarterly basis, while external demand will remain strong. In such a context, resource companies specializing in oil and gas production, coal, chemicals and nonferrous metals are the most likely to see their profitability improve. Opportunities can also be found among new energy manufacturers with global competitiveness, he said.

Morgan Stanley analysts said in a recent report that A-share company earnings will improve moderately in the following months.

Their optimism is supported by China's stronger exports amid an accelerating artificial intelligence and energy capex cycle, near-term reflation signs, Chinese currency appreciation against the US dollar, and a cooling down in large-cap platform companies' price competition amid strict government regulations.

The investment bank continues to prefer the A-share market over offshore alternatives mainly because of the higher concentration of high-end upstream manufacturing and hard-core tech companies in China. There is a high likelihood that A-share initial public offerings will trigger greater domestic investor participation, according to the report.

"We do believe that the sheer size of opportunities in China's equity market at the single stock and thematic level — fueled by solid fundamentals and promising themes such as tech localization and high-end manufacturing — should allow investors to construct a targeted Chinese portfolio that outperforms other peers," said Laura Wang, the investment bank's chief China equity strategist.

The tech-heavy ChiNext board in Shenzhen topped the 4000-point level on Wednesday to reach a record high. This has shown the market's recognition of China's ongoing industrial restructuring and upgrading, said Guo Yiming, head of investment advisory at Jufeng Investment.

Companies specializing in power equipment, communications, electronics, pharmaceuticals, biotech and computers — which make up most of the ChiNext's constituents — have fueled the recent rally. This is in line with the structural opportunities in the current A-share market, which is supported by the continued rising demand for AI computing power and the development of new energy industries, Guo said.

Amid ample market liquidity and continued policy support for emerging industries, the ChiNext is expected to receive a relatively high level of attention, he added.

But it should be noted that a structurally diverged performance is implied in ChiNext's recent bull. The index has been mainly propelled by the market leaders, as the index's top 10 heavyweights now take up 57 percent of the board's entire market cap.

Therefore, individual investors should avoid being overly affected by market sentiment, but rather focus on the prosperity and profitability of the companies they have chosen, said Guo.



A display shows Chinese stock indices in Shanghai on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A one-person company owner works at an industrial park designated for OPC businesses in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, on March 25. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

AI drives boom in one-person companies nationwide

By **LI JIAYING**
lijiaying@chinadaily.com.cn

As artificial intelligence tools become cheaper, smarter and easier to use, they are helping more Chinese entrepreneurs turn personal expertise and online followings into one-person companies (OPCs), building lean businesses powered by digital platforms and AI-driven productivity.

For Wang Yao, founder of an OPC built around her online personal channel "Wiley", the appeal lies not in scale, but in flexibility and low risk.

Through social media content sharing personal growth, life abroad and cost-effective ways to improve productivity, Wang's channel has attracted over 100,000 followers on Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, and has built a business centered on consulting services and brand partnerships.

"The company operates in a very healthy way because it has zero debt, low costs and high flexibility," Wang said, describing her business model as the monetization of "trust-based traffic".

> "The growing abundance, accessibility and usability of AI tools are key to one person becoming a team."
>
> **He Xia,** a former chief engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology

Wang said more people are beginning to realize that entrepreneurship no longer necessarily requires large teams, venture capital or corporate backing.

"People are gradually discovering that you don't have to join a major company or pursue fundraising and IPOs," she said. "One person can still build a decent business through their own skills and influence."

The content creator added that the rapid development of AI tools has become a major factor behind that shift.

"I do not need to hire copywriters, designers or video editors. AI has taken on these roles. That keeps the marginal cost of running my OPC extremely low and allows me to test new content directions or business models with very low risk," she said.

"The growing abundance, accessibility and usability of AI tools are key to one person becoming a team," said He Xia, a former chief engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Current AI tools can cover functions from software development and daily searches to image generation and audio-video production, and AI agents such as OpenClaw are also lowering the coding threshold and bringing opportunities for entrepreneurs with little technical background, said He.

The trend is now reshaping China's entrepreneurial landscape. According to the China OPC development trends report (2025-30) released by the Zhongguancun Talent Association in February, the number of OPCs nationwide had exceeded 16 million by June 2025, accounting for 27.4 percent of all enterprises in China.

In the first half of 2025 alone, China registered 2.86 million new OPCs, up 47 percent year-on-year and accounting for nearly a quarter of all newly registered businesses.

Still, analysts also cautioned that AI alone cannot guarantee long-term business success.

"Many people focus only on AI's impact on productivity while overlooking that in the 'human plus AI' model, the human remains the core competitive factor," said Zhou Guangsu, a professor at Renmin University of China's school of labor and human resources.

Zhou said that while AI can help entrepreneurs rapidly build products and applications, commercialization still depends heavily on business judgment, market insight and resilience under pressure.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said OPCs should not become a purely symbolic trend.

"What matters is substance over form," Pan said, adding that lowering transaction costs, improving the business environment and strengthening talent-support policies will be key to the sector's sustainable development.

EU cybersecurity law revision seen as loss-making move

By **WANG KEJU**
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Excluding Chinese suppliers under the European Union's proposed revision of the Cybersecurity Act will not deliver the security gains Brussels desires, but could instead weaken the bloc's digital competitiveness and crowd out innovation investment, experts have warned.

The warning comes as the EU reviews its draft legislation, which would identify "countries posing cybersecurity concerns" and "high-risk suppliers" and exclude them from 18 sectors, including energy, transport, and information and communications technology.

Earlier this month, the bloc restricted funding for renewable energy projects using inverters from suppliers in its list of "high-risk countries" such as China, in an attempt to tackle its so-called cybersecurity threats.

According to a joint report released last week by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU (CCCEU) and global advisory firm KPMG, the EU could face an estimated loss of as much as 367.8 billion euros ($430.54 billion) over the next five years if Brussels excludes Chinese suppliers.

The cumulative economic losses for EU member states would be "equivalent to nearly two full years of the EU's annual budget", the report said, noting that Germany would bear the largest burden, with estimated losses of 170.8 billion euros, followed by France and Italy.

"The criteria for identifying so-called 'high-risk suppliers' appear to be politically targeted," said CCCEU Chairman Liu Jiandong. "This approach politicizes commercial decision-making and runs counter to the EU's own principles of equality and non-discrimination."

According to the report, there has been no substantiated evidence so far of "technical backdoors" or violations of EU cybersecurity rules by Chinese companies operating in the bloc, and the origin-based screening measures could violate WTO rules, breach bilateral investment treaties and trigger compensation claims.

He Yongqian, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce, said in late April that formal comments were submitted to the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, voicing serious concerns over relevant provisions in the draft.

"We hope the EU will attach great importance to and seriously consider the comments and proposed revisions submitted by the Chinese side," said He.

The spokeswoman stressed that should Chinese companies face discriminatory treatment as a result of the revision, China may take measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

China believes that dialogue and cooperation are the right approach to resolving issues facing both sides, and is willing to work with the EU to properly handle differences through consultations and jointly safeguard the stability and smooth operation of global industrial and supply chains, added He.

The report stresses that mandatory replacement of Chinese suppliers is "unlikely to achieve meaningful security gains". Instead, it warns of systemic negative effects: innovation budgets could be crowded out, fiscal burdens on member states increased and household incomes eroded.

Losing the European market would be a blow to Chinese companies, but many of them have already pivoted their focus toward the domestic market and the Global South, where demand for digital infrastructure remains strong, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Worse still, the EU could lose its strategic autonomy in the ongoing restructuring of global industrial chains," Zhou said, adding that such efforts will only bring limited benefits to the EU.

Envision bags wind energy project in Canada

By **ZHENG XIN**
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

Envision Group, a leading Chinese green technology firm, has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Cape Breton China Corp (CBCC) to develop a 300-megawatt integrated wind and energy storage project in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The deal, finalized in Shanghai earlier this week, represents a milestone in the global expansion of China's "wind-storage integration" model.

Beyond mere hardware exports, the partnership underscores a shift toward providing holistic zero-carbon solutions that combine cutting-edge artificial intelligence-driven energy systems with local capacity building, according to the Shanghai-based green technology giant.

The project, designed as a zero-carbon demonstration site, integrates 300 MW of wind power with an advanced battery energy storage system. It aims to enhance the flexibility and stability of the local power grid, supporting the province's transition toward a cleaner, digital-driven energy architecture, it said.

"By leveraging Envision's leading AI-driven storage and smart wind solutions, alongside CBCC's strong local resources and development capabilities, we will build a more robust renewable energy ecosystem," said Zhu Yi, senior business director of Envision Energy Canada. "Starting from Nova Scotia, we aim to expand our footprint across the North American market."

Envision's overseas expansion is indicative of a broader momentum among Chinese green technology enterprises, which are rapidly scaling up their global deployments to meet surging international demand for integrated renewable solutions.

Global battery energy storage capacity is on track for monumental growth, with projections from the China Energy Storage Alliance (CNESA) indicating an eight- to 17-fold increase between 2024 and 2035.

However, the sector — currently spearheaded by China, the United States and Europe — is moving away from its initial explosive boom and entering a stabilizing, transitional phase, said Chen Haisheng, chairman of the CNESA and director of the Institute of Engineering Thermophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Between 2026 and 2030, the industry's compound annual growth rate is forecast to reach 20.7 percent under conservative estimates, with the potential to hit 25.5 percent in a best-case scenario, Chen said.

Amid this industry shift, Envision's competitive edge lies in its long-term commitment to localization and research and development. Since 2010, the company has built a comprehensive international ecosystem, including the largest R&D center established by a Chinese firm in Denmark, as well as battery cell factories in Japan, the United Kingdom, France and Spain.

In addition, there has been a rapid acceleration of Chinese energy storage enterprises globally.

In the first quarter, China's energy storage battery shipments reached 209 gigawatt-hours, a 115 percent year-on-year increase, with major players like Envision and Contemporary Amperex Technology remaining the preferred partners for GWh-scale projects across Europe, North America and the Middle East.

The global push is fueled by the plummeting cost of renewable energy. A recent report from the International Renewable Energy Agency indicates that in resource-rich regions, the cost of solar-plus-storage has dropped to between $54 and $82 per MWh — significantly lower than the $100+ per MWh required for new gas-fired power plants.

Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, recently emphasized that the argument regarding the "unreliability" of renewables no longer holds water.

"The ability to provide 24/7 renewable power is now cost-competitive with fossil fuels," he said.

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CHINA

China builds fastest quantum computer

Speed of Jiuzhang 4.0 prototype is a result of use and control of photons

By **LI MENGHAN** and **ZHU LIXIN**



A partial view of Jiuzhang 4.0. ZHOU MU / XINHUA

A team of Chinese scientists has developed the world's fastest quantum computer prototype, named Jiuzhang 4.0, capable of solving complex mathematical problems in less than the blink of an eye — tasks that even for the world's most powerful supercomputer would take longer than the age of the entire universe to crack.

The findings, published in the journal Nature on Wednesday, push the quantum advantage in computing to an unprecedented level, demonstrating China's leading position in the field.

A quantum computer operates on the laws of quantum mechanics. Its basic building blocks, called quantum bits or qubits, can exist in a superposition of both 0 and 1 simultaneously — unlike conventional bits, which are either 0 or 1.

This allows quantum computers to explore many computational paths in parallel, providing exponential speedup for certain tasks, such as solving some mathematical problems and simulating quantum systems.

Current mainstream quantum computing technological routes include superconducting, ion trap, photonic, and neutral atom systems. The Jiuzhang series, photonic quantum computers, encodes information in particles of light, and its speed depends on the ability to manipulate and control these photons.

However, in the development of large-scale photonic quantum processors, inevitable photon loss — a major source of computational error — has long been a serious constraint. As the optical network grows larger and more complex, photons can easily get "lost" in the maze, significantly degrading computational power.

To address the problem, the research team, led by the University of Science and Technology of China, developed a high-efficiency optical parametric oscillator light source and a spatiotemporally hybrid-coded interferometer, laying the groundwork for building a fault-tolerant photonic quantum processor.

They integrated 1,024 high-efficiency squeezed-state optical fields into a spatiotemporally hybrid-coded circuit with 8,176 modes, achieving a source efficiency of 92 percent and an overall system efficiency of 51 percent.

These represent major breakthroughs in low-loss photonic quantum information processing.

Moreover, the spatiotemporally hybrid-coded architecture allows photons to interact across both time and space dimensions, greatly improving the connectivity of the entire network while keeping the physical device scale under control.

Based on these advancements, the team achieved the manipulation and detection of up to 3,050 photons — a significant leap from the 255 photons achieved with the previous Jiuzhang 3.0, as published in 2023.

Experiments showed that the most complex data sample generated by Jiuzhang 4.0 takes only 25 microseconds to produce — where a microsecond is one-millionth of a second.

In contrast, the world's most powerful supercomputer, El Capitan, developed by the United States, would require more than 10 to the power of 42 years to calculate the same result.

In 2020, scientists from the University of Science and Technology of China successfully developed the Jiuzhang photonic quantum computing prototype with 76 photons, making China the second country in the world to achieve the quantum computational advantage, and the first to achieve it in an optical system.

Quantum technology is emphasized in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) as both a future industry and a strategic frontier that requires sustained reinforcement.

The plan stresses the need to advance basic theories and foundational technologies while accelerating their industrial application, with goals set for the development of fault-tolerant universal quantum computers and scalable, special-purpose quantum computers.

Contact the writers at limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

Voices build bridges



International students perform Chinese songs at the Nigerian booth during an international youth cultural festival at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing on Thursday. Featuring booths from countries around the world, the event brought together students as "cultural ambassadors" showcasing traditional costumes, handicrafts and cuisine. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

Experts focus on Austronesian history

By **LIU BOQIAN** and **HU MEIDONG**

Discussions in Pingtan, Fujian province, have renewed attention on Austronesian history and cross-Strait cultural ties, as experts, scholars and representatives of Taiwan's indigenous communities called for broader recognition of what they described as shared heritage.

"We should face the historical fact that today's Austronesian speakers trace their origins to the Chinese mainland, though many people are still unaware of this," said Xu Guirong, vice-president of the Pingtan International Institute of Austronesian Research, during a roundtable held as part of the 2026 Cross-Strait Marine Cultural Exchange Platform recently.

Austronesian-speaking communities span a vast area from Southeast Asia to the Pacific islands, including many of Taiwan's indigenous groups.

Xu cited a 2020 study published in the journal Science by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which said early Austronesian-speaking populations emerged in Fujian and nearby areas of southern China about 8,400 years ago.

He also called for greater inclusion of Austronesian history in school curricula and stronger efforts to challenge what he described as distorted historical narratives.

One roundtable examined cultural origins and heritage, with participants discussing Austronesian traditions, the preservation of indigenous customs and historical links.

"The Chinese nation has long been shaped by cultural integration," said Liao Shih-chieh, a representative of Taiwan's Pingpu people and an advocate of intangible cultural heritage preservation.

"For people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to live peacefully on this beautiful and united land and build a prosperous and harmonious China together is a blessing for both sides," he said.

Kimi Sibal, a historian based in Hualien, compared tattooing traditions among indigenous groups in Taiwan with those of ethnic communities on the Chinese mainland, including the Li people in Hainan province, saying they shared similarities in creation myths and cultural practices.

An exhibition on maritime civilization opened on Tuesday alongside the forum, featuring archaeological displays, indigenous artifacts and immersive audio exhibits that highlighted shared maritime cultural heritage across the Strait.

Contact the writers at liuboqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Building compliant digital bridges across the Pacific

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**



A group photo of GOIP. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: Luo Sean, CEO of Eton InfoComm Technology. Leung Chi-yuen, chairman of GOIP. Lok Lian, general manager of Eton InfoComm Technology.

Securing cross-border data flows has become a strategic priority for enterprises expanding between China and the United States, where differing regulatory frameworks create complex operational challenges, according to Leung Chi-yuen, chairman of GOIP.

Founded in 2012, GOIP is an international telecommunications and managed service provider, serving as a critical link between the Asia-Pacific region and North America. The company facilitates secure and compliant data transit across the Pacific, acting as a managed digital bridge for businesses.

"Our role is to build the infrastructure and governance frameworks that allow enterprises to focus on their core business rather than regulatory complexities," Leung said.

Two-way growth

GOIP's services encompass the full spectrum of needs for enterprises establishing operations in new markets, from initial planning through ongoing management. The company's "one-stop" service model aims to simplify global IT management by providing coordinated solutions across network infrastructure, security compliance and operational support.

For Chinese companies expanding in the US, GOIP provides local support for infrastructure, compliance and operations. Similarly, for US businesses entering China, the company addresses connectivity, security and regulatory needs including compliance with the Personal Information Protection Law.

"Many providers are purely virtual; when a router fails or a cable is cut in a US data center, they open a ticket and wait. GOIP is different," Leung said.

"We have local offices and a professional team in the US, complemented by our long-term partner Eton InfoComm Technology. This partnership allows us to offer implementation excellence. If a Chinese client opens a new branch in the US, our local engineers are there to manage the rack and stack, the cabling and the configuration."

Unified protection

At the core of GOIP's value proposition is an integrated approach to network security and management. The company provides a unified platform encompassing network infrastructure, security protocols and operational monitoring. This integration allows for coordinated management of different system components, potentially improving responsiveness and reducing compatibility issues that can arise when using multiple service providers. The company's software-defined wide area network solutions are specifically engineered for trans-Pacific connectivity, addressing latency and reliability challenges that commonly affect cross-border communications.



> "Our role is to build the infrastructure and governance frameworks that allow enterprises to focus on their core business rather than regulatory complexities."
>
> **Leung Chi-yuen,** chairman of GOIP

The company's service model includes continuous monitoring through its proprietary network operations center capabilities. This approach aims to identify and address potential issues before they affect operations, providing enterprises with additional oversight of their cross-border digital infrastructure. Through 24/7 monitoring and response capabilities, GOIP seeks to minimize downtime and performance degradation for mission-critical applications such as enterprise resource planning and customer relationship management systems.

"Traditionally, companies hire one vendor for their network and a separate vendor for security. This creates 'blind spots,'" Leung noted. "GOIP manages VAPT (vulnerability assessment and penetration testing) and SIEM (security information and event management) directly, meaning our security protocols are built into the fabric of the network, not bolted on as an afterthought. Our VAPT is performed by our in-house experts who know the network's architecture intimately. Once we harden the perimeter, our SIEM provides 24/7 surveillance. Because GOIP manages the entire stack, if a threat is detected by our SIEM, our NOC (network operations center) can act instantly to mitigate it within the network."

Navigating rules

With governments worldwide implementing new data protection regulations and cross-border data flow requirements, enterprises face an increasingly complex compliance environment. GOIP's services include advisory support to help companies navigate these regulatory requirements while maintaining efficient operations. The company positions itself as a strategic adviser, assisting clients in developing data governance frameworks that address multiple jurisdictional requirements. This advisory function extends beyond technical implementation to include strategic planning for data localization, cross-border transfer mechanisms and compliance documentation.

Recent developments in regional cooperation frameworks, such as the memorandum of understanding on facilitating cross-boundary data flow within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, have created new opportunities for service providers specializing in cross-border data solutions. These frameworks aim to facilitate data flows while maintaining appropriate protections, requiring specialized expertise for effective implementation.

GOIP has developed specific service offerings tailored to leverage these regulatory developments, helping clients optimize their data management strategies within approved frameworks.

"The traditional model of hiring local IT teams in every city is inefficient and costly. GOIP solves this through our integrated ITSM (IT service management) and NMS (network management system) ecosystem," Leung said. "Because we have our own proprietary network operations center team and in-house engineers, we act as the client's extended department. We handle the 24/7 monitoring, incident response and performance tuning. Our AI-empowered NOC automates the analysis of network logs and performance data, which significantly increases operational efficiency and reduces human error and risk. This, in turn, allows clients to streamline their on-site IT manpower requirements. Our NMS identifies bottlenecks before they cause downtime, and our ITSM framework ensures every request is handled with professional precision. This 'Lean IT' model provides a smooth, fast and low-cost operation."

GOIP's integrated solutions are built upon a foundation of internationally and nationally recognized credentials. The company's information security management is certified to the ISO 27001 standard, while its security services hold the China Cybersecurity Review Technology and Certification Center's Information Security Service Qualification. Its operational capabilities are validated by Singapore's Cybersecurity Services Regulation Office, its accredited Penetration Testing Service, its System and Organization Controls certification, and its authority to operate as a facilities-based carrier in the US under Federal Communications Commission Section 214 & 499. Service delivery is guided by Information Technology Infrastructure Library 4 Foundation's best practices, and its strategic advisory team includes professionals with a Certified Information Systems Security Professional certification.

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WORLD



Members of Iran's national soccer team attend a farewell ceremony in Tehran on Wednesday ahead of their departure for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. ATTA KENARE / AFP

UAE rejects Israeli visit claim

Dispute deepens diplomatic strain as ceasefire faces mounting pressure

By **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE, and **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong

The United Arab Emirates has flatly rejected an Israeli claim of a "secret visit" by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the war with Iran, labeling it as "baseless".

This development adds complexity to the already strained diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing the collapse of the tenuous ceasefire between Washington and Tehran.

In a statement released on Wednesday night via state news agency WAM, the UAE said its relations with Israel "are public and conducted within the framework of the well-known and officially declared Abraham Accords, and are not based on nontransparent or unofficial arrangements".

The statement also denied receiving any Israeli military delegation.

The reaction came hours after Netanyahu's office announced the visit on social media and branded the meeting a "historic breakthrough".

The Times of Israel, citing an informed source, said on Thursday that the visit took place in the city of Al Ain near the Omani border on March 26 and lasted several hours.

The UAE and Israel normalized relations under the US-brokered Abraham Accords signed in September 2020.

Palestinian leaders have long condemned the deal as a "stab in the back". Iran has also criticized the agreement and for years alleged that Israel has maintained a military and intelligence presence in the UAE.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on social media that Israel "publicly revealed" what was already known by the Iranian security services, warning that "collusion" with Israel is "unforgivable".

The UAE and other Arab countries were targeted by Iranian missile and drone attacks after the US and Israel launched airstrikes against Iran in late February. A fragile ceasefire involving Iran, the US and Israel has been in place since April 8.

According to WAM's reports earlier this month, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received calls from several regional leaders after Iranian attacks on the country on May 5, including from Netanyahu.

US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee also revealed this week that Israel had sent Iron Dome air-defense weapons, along with personnel to operate them, to the UAE.

Political solutions

However, Anwar Gargash, an adviser to the UAE's president, said on Wednesday that the Gulf nation remained committed to political solutions and diplomacy amid regional tensions, while stressing the country's right to defend its sovereignty.

Relations between Arab states and Iran should not be defined by confrontation, he added.

Meanwhile, US Vice-President JD Vance said on Wednesday that he believes progress is being made in negotiations with Iran to end hostilities, after US President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest proposal as unacceptable.

"The red line is very simple," Vance said. "He (the president) needs to feel confident that we have put a number of protections in place such that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Nevertheless, an Iranian Army spokesman said the armed forces are maintaining "the highest level of readiness", warning that "there is no room for retreat" as tensions with the US persist.

Iranian First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref said the country's "right to the Strait of Hormuz is established, and the matter is closed".

Iran's ISNA news agency quoted him as saying that Iran's plans "were tailored to the sanctions and pressures of our enemies, but now we must plan for the security and well-being of our country and the region".

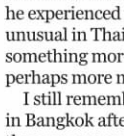
Even amid simmering tensions, Iran held a send-off ceremony on Wednesday for the national soccer team ahead of the 2026 World Cup, cohosted by the US, Mexico and Canada.

At a square in central Tehran, people waved flags, chanted slogans and some held placards honoring the late supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed during the war.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

Thailand's embrace of its youngest treasures

FIRST PERSON VIEW



Yang Wanli
Reporter's log

While foreigners often praise Thailand for its hospitality, I've come to believe children may be the group the country cherishes most. Few countries devote an entire national celebration so wholeheartedly for children — not as a commercial occasion, but as a deeply rooted social value.

Rather than observing the International Children's Day on June 1, Thailand celebrates Wan Dek, or National Children's Day, on the second Saturday of January each year. Across the country, the message is unmistakable: children are the nation's most precious resource.

The celebrations begin even before the holiday arrives. Schools organize performances, games and community events, with children receiving gifts from teachers.

On Children's Day, youngsters are showered with affection by family members and strangers alike. Shopping malls host concerts, while public attractions lower ticket prices or open free of charge to families. Streets fill with children clutching balloons and snacks, walking with a rare sense of collective joy.

Yet, what struck me most was not the festivities themselves, but the seriousness with which Thai society treats childhood.

On the day, children are invited to the Government House, where they can sit in the prime minister's office — a symbolic gesture affirming that they matter.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul introduced this year's slogan "Love Thailand, Care for the World", emphasizing civic responsibility, environmental awareness and global citizenship.

The Royal Thai Air Force opens its bases to the public for large-scale celebrations featuring aircraft displays, military demonstrations, interactive games and live performances.

Last year, I took my son to one of the events, and it felt less like a military showcase than a nationwide carnival. Tens of thousands attended. Children climbed onto aircraft cockpits as smiling air force personnel lifted them up for photos.

Shuttle buses moved between parking areas and the venue. Volunteers distributed free bottled water. Temporary stalls sold food and toys at modest prices. The atmosphere was orderly yet warm — a public celebration designed not only for children, but also for the people around them.

My son talked about the event for weeks afterward. But the kindness he experienced that day was not unusual in Thailand. It reflected something more ordinary — and perhaps more meaningful.

I still remember our initial weeks in Bangkok after we moved there three years ago. Our son was only 4, and every morning we walked him to the kindergarten. Along a route of barely 10 minutes, four or five strangers would smile, wave or greet him warmly — security guards, fruit vendors, lottery sellers, people we had never met before.

That openness is evident in daily life. Market vendors often slip extra fruit into his hands. Staff at the shopping malls and play centers offer him snacks or candy. On Bangkok's elevated Skytrain, passengers routinely offer him a seat, even now, at 7, when he's perfectly capable of standing.

Over time, I have watched my once shy and sensitive child change. Thailand has rewarded his attempts to engage with the world rather than discouraging them. When he speaks to restaurant staff, people praise him. When he helps carry luggage at the airport, fellow passengers compliment his manners. Encouragement comes easily and naturally from strangers.

Perhaps, most revealing is the patience that Thai society shows toward children when they are not at their best.

Young children cry. Six-year-olds can be loud, restless and impulsive. Parents sometimes lose their cool. These are universal realities. Yet, I've rarely seen adults glaring at misbehaving children with rage, scolding them or humiliating the parents struggling to calm them down.

There's a familiar saying in China that children are the flowers of the motherland, reflecting a long-standing belief that the younger generation embodies the nation's future.

In many ways, China has made extraordinary progress in caring for children, with the health of children continuing to improve in recent years. Official data showed that the net enrollment rate for primary school-aged children remained at 99.9 percent, covering around 160 million students nationwide.

With the rise in social media platforms such as Douyin — China's TikTok — and Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, parenting bloggers have attracted huge audiences. Videos capturing children's innocence, humor and candid remarks have won the hearts of countless adults.

For many, children offer a rare sense of purity and wonder amid the pressures of modern life. Yet, online debates over "wild children" — those seen as disruptive or badly behaved — also emerge from time to time.

While people continue to adore these lovable children, such conversations have also prompted deeper reflection on how parents and society should guide the next generation — so that the kindness, sincerity and innocence of childhood can continue into adulthood.

My observations are deeply personal. Still, I wonder whether Thailand offers a small but meaningful answer.

The core value of Children's Day in Thailand underscores a simple social philosophy: parents should lead by example, while children should grow up with gratitude, respect and emotional security. The idea is straightforward — the way society treats children shapes how those children eventually treat the world.

To be raised with love means far more than hearing the words "I love you". It means growing up feeling emotionally safe, accepted without constant judgment, listened to rather than being dismissed, and disciplined with patience rather than humiliation.

Children raised with respect often learn to respect others. Those treated with kindness tend to pass on that kindness. Perhaps, that is the quiet wisdom behind Thailand's affection for children: a society that makes space for its youngest members ultimately produces gentler adults too.

The author is chief correspondent at China Daily Asia-Pacific Bureau based in Bangkok.

Contact the writer at yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

UN agency hails China's green development

By **SHARON NAKOLA** in Nairobi, Kenya
sharon@chinadailyafrica.com

Developing countries facing rapid urbanization and rising housing demand can draw on China's experience with green construction and low-carbon development, United Nations officials say.

Speaking at a media briefing on Wednesday ahead of the 13th session of the World Urban Forum, to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, between May 17 and 22, UN Environment Programme officials warned that rapid urban growth, particularly in Africa and Asia, is piling pressure on countries to expand housing and infrastructure while also cutting emissions and improving climate resilience.

Martin Krause, director of Climate Change Division at UNEP, said many developing countries are confronting a "dual challenge" of expanding infrastructure while reducing emissions, particularly in regions where housing shortages and inadequate living conditions remain widespread.

He highlighted China's large-scale urban development over recent decades as an example worth studying.

"The work that China has done in this particular sector is certainly impressive," Krause said, adding that African countries facing growing housing and infrastructure needs could learn from such experiences through international platforms that share best practices on sustainable construction and climate action.

Krause said buildings are increasingly becoming central to the climate crisis because they sit at the intersection of emissions, affordability and resilience.

Inefficient buildings lock in high energy demand and increase household costs, while climate-smart buildings can reduce energy bills, strengthen energy security and provide protection against rising temperatures and extreme weather, he said.

Energy efficiency

China's urban expansion demonstrated how countries can pursue large-scale infrastructure development while improving building practices and energy efficiency, lessons that the UNEP said are becoming increasingly relevant as urban populations continue to grow worldwide.

Over the past decades, China has invested significant resources in its transition to an inclusive green economy, and it has proved that the shift would be beneficial for economic growth, climate change mitigation, job creation and improving people's living standards, according to a previous UNEP report.

The nation has been a major innovator and producer of renewable energy, producing the world's largest amount of solar panels and wind turbines, which have been extensively adopted in urban development nationwide.

The UNEP officials also presented the findings of the Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2025/2026, to be released next week. The report provides a comprehensive assessment of how the sector can reduce emissions, manage climate risks and maintain affordability while expanding rapidly to meet growing global demand for housing and infrastructure.

Oliver Rapf, executive director of the Buildings Performance Institute Europe, said global building floor space continues to expand rapidly, but efforts to decarbonize the sector remain far behind what is needed to meet international climate goals.

Operational emissions from buildings have increased by 6.5 percent since 2015, even though emissions would need to decline by more than 30 percent to stay aligned with the Paris Agreement pathway, Rapf said. "The world is building fast, falling short as climate risks rise and cities grow."

Hanane Hafraoui, program management officer at the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, said governments must move from climate pledges to implementation by making low-carbon and resilient buildings central to national climate plans.

"The task now is to move from pilots to scale, from commitments to implementation, and from climate ambitions to having better homes and better lives for people," she said.

"We cannot solve the climate crisis without making homes more affordable, more climate resilient, and energy efficient."

Paralyzed by rain



Vehicles move through waterlogged streets in front of a market in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Wednesday, as relentless rains cause severe flooding and traffic congestion in the area. SONY RAMANI VIA GETTY IMAGES

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
Advertising: 212-537-8916
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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A dialogue with the Americas

Exhibition dives deep into Latin civilizations in its largest showcase worldwide, with nearly 3,000 artifacts, many of which are making their China debut, **Zhang Kun** reports.

The Shanghai Museum announced the opening of ticket sales for its upcoming exhibition on May 8, *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas*, which will be the world's largest showcase of ancient American civilizations.

The museum launched sales of 200,000 early-bird tickets through its official WeChat platform and the travel service Trip.com on the same day. More than 10,000 tickets were sold in 40 minutes, breaking the presale record for the massively successful Egyptian exhibition hosted by the museum last year.

Scheduled to run at the Shanghai Museum on People's Square from July 9 to Nov 14, 2027, the *Americas* exhibition will display nearly 3,000 artifacts from Mexico and Peru. According to Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum, it will be one of "the world's largest, most authoritative, most comprehensively narrated, and latest presentations of ancient American civilizations".

At the global launch on May 8, Chu, wearing a shirt specially designed for the exhibition featuring signature plants and animals of the Americas, described it as "a once-in-a-lifetime experience".

The exhibition is the sixth installment of the Shanghai Museum's A Dialogue with the World Exhibition series. Last year, the fifth event, *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt,* attracted more than 2.77 million visitors and generated over 30 billion online views, setting a new record for the highest attendance at a single paid exhibition in museums worldwide.

More than 70 percent of the visitors were from overseas and other parts of China outside Shanghai. The exhibition generated revenue of more than 760 million yuan ($111.9 million).

Following the great success of the Egyptian exhibition, the Shanghai Museum has collaborated with leading archaeological institutions in Mexico and Peru, as well as top Chinese scholars, to create a panoramic presentation of ancient American civilizations, including the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca.

Shanghai officials and diplomats from Peru and Mexico on May 8 launch *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas*, one of the museum's flagship exhibitions of the year. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

The museum will dedicate all its galleries at its People's Square venue to the exhibition. Spanning over 7,000 square meters, the exhibition will be designed in two parts.

Galleries on the first and second floors will be jointly presented by the Shanghai Museum, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia and the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico. Showcasing more than 2,600 cultural relics from 13 Mexican institutions, this part will highlight the distinct pantheon system and power structures of major Mesoamerican civilizations, focusing on their complex spiritual beliefs and material achievements.

The third-floor, jointly organized with Peru's Larco Museum and NEON Group, which specializes in experimental and large-scale immersive experiences, will feature 325 treasured artifacts from Peru, 116 of which will make their overseas debut. This will be the largest showcase of the Andean civilization in China and one of the most extensive international displays of Andean gold and silver artifacts ever presented by Peru.

One of the largest exhibits will be the *Olmec Colossal Stone Head 4* from the Museo de Antropologia de Xalapa, Mexico. Weighing approximately 4.5 tons, it symbolizes the power of the Olmecs, one of the earliest known civilizations of the Americas.

The tallest exhibit will be *Calakmul Stela 51* from the Museo Nacional de Antropologia. One of the most outstanding portrait works of Mayan art, it depicts Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, the great ruler of the Kaan kingdom based in Calakmul. Due to its 4-meter height, the Shanghai Museum will construct a specially designed, climate-controlled glass case and display it outdoors on People's Square.

To ensure the safe and timely transportation of these artifacts, the Shanghai Museum will charter two large cargo aircraft from China Eastern Airlines. The planes, adorned with motifs inspired by the patterns of ancient Mexican ruins and depicting the *Feathered Serpent*, will travel nearly 30,000 kilometers round-trip to deliver the cultural relics to Shanghai.

Beyond common labels of "mysterious" and "primitive", the Americas possess a complete and profound civilizational system, Chu says. Moreover, there are deep archaeological and cultural connections between it and Asia. To highlight these links, the museum will also display selected Chinese cultural relics on loan from domestic institutions from seven provinces.

According to David Gamarra, consul general of Peru in Shanghai, most of the cultural relics in the exhibition are making their China debut. These artifacts vividly illustrate the artistic style and spiritual life of Andean civilizations, reflecting the exquisite artistry and highly developed culture of ancient Peru.

Gamarra says the exhibition will further strengthen cultural exchange between Peru and China; and hopes it will attract more Chinese tourists to visit the country.

Rodrigo Topete Maza, acting consul general of Mexico in Shanghai, notes the profound friendship and long histories shared by China and Mexico. He hopes that through the exhibition, visitors will sense the deep connections between the two nations and the shared spiritual core of their civilizations.

Zhong Xiaomin, director of the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, said at the global launch: "We want to take this exhibition as an opportunity to further build a platform for cultural exchange between China and Latin America and introduce more high-quality Latin American cultural resources to China."

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Selected artifacts from Shanghai Museum's new exhibition on the civilizations of the Americas, many of which are being shown overseas for the first time. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Online Scan the code to watch the video.

Fused with ballet, Muqam carries Uygur heritage forward

By **ZHANG KUN**

The Shanghai Ballet premiered its latest production, *The Heartbeat of Muqam*, with two performances at the Shanghai International Dance Center on Saturday and Sunday. Inspired by the folk music and dance of the Uygur ethnic group from northwestern China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the work represents a creative exploration of intangible cultural heritage through dance.

Muqam, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, is a traditional performing art that combines the singing, music and dance of the Uygur ethnic group. "Muqam carries the imprint of cultural exchange and integration along the Silk Road, embodying the shared memories and deep emotions of the Chinese nation," says Ji Pingping, director of the Shanghai Ballet.

Founded in 1979, the Shanghai Ballet has long been committed to presenting Chinese culture through the international language of ballet. "We have discovered many connections between ballet and Xinjiang songs and dances," Ji notes.





Scenes from Shanghai Ballet's latest production *The Heartbeat of Muqam*. Inspired by the folk music and dance from Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the work represents a creative exploration of intangible cultural heritage through ballet. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Heartbeat of Muqam not only marks an innovative breakthrough for the Shanghai Ballet but it also represents the use of dance in telling Chinese stories, she adds.

Creating the ballet spanned three years and involved six research trips to Xinjiang. During their visits, the dancers observed that "Muqam lives in the melodies, rhythms and movements of the local people. It is a natural part of their lives and an intuitive expression of emotion," shares principal dancer Qi Bingxue, who plays the protagonist in the production.

The ballet tells the story of a young musician of the Uygur ethnic group who returns to her hometown to retrace childhood memories and cultural roots, and rediscovers the contemporary vitality of Muqam.

In the dance-theater piece, the heroine livestreams a Xinjiang wedding via mobile devices, sharing the charm of Muqam with a global audience. "It reflects the real-life setting of today's Xinjiang, where Muqam resonates with the people rather than being confined to ancient books," Qi explains.

Ding Wei, former director of the China Song & Dance Ensemble, praises the production for its "outstanding integration of classical ballet and China's intangible cultural heritage".

"The stage design is beautiful, and the dancers deliver top-tier performances," he says, describing the work as "representing the highest level of dance art in Shanghai, and also in China".

He notes that Xinjiang folk dance is improvisational, quite distinct from ballet's structured vocabulary. "I saw a remarkable fusion of the two styles in this production, and the director has done an excellent job," he says.

Director Wang Ge emphasizes the fusion's organic nature: "You can't simply stitch together ballet footwork and folk dance's upper-body movements. It's important to maintain a fine line that keeps it authentically ballet rather than turning into a folk dance show."

Playwright Luo Huaizhen notes that this unprecedented blend significantly enriches the vocabulary of classical ballet and will make a meaningful contribution to the dance world.

A Xinjiang native surnamed Lu, who attended the opening night, recalled her childhood experiences with her friends of Uygur ethnic group: "We would sing and dance whenever people gathered. The pot-bellied character reminded me of uncles back home, and I recognized those dance moves, too!" she says in excitement.

She also commends the presentation of Xinjiang's cultural heritage through ballet. "There are many ways to introduce Muqam to the public. While folk dance is accessible to many, ballet conveys it more vividly to international audiences. We need more efforts like this to share Xinjiang with the world."

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LIFE







From left: Produced with the joint contributions of over 60,000 experts and scholars, the print and online editions of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* have become important vehicles for showcasing Chinese culture. As part of the event, the *Encyclopedia of Emergency Safety for Chinese Schools* was launched. A band performs during the "Night of the Encyclopedia". PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Encyclopedia of China enters AI era

Scholars and publishers gather in Beijing to examine how emerging technologies are transforming public access to trusted information, **Yang Yang** reports.





Above: The *Encyclopedia of Chinese and Italian Culture: Art* was highlighted at the conference as a key achievement. The book introduces the representative accomplishments in the fields of art from both China and Italy. **Left:** The conference also features an exhibition of outstanding popular science books.

The inaugural China Encyclopedia Conference, hosted by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, took place in Beijing from April 23 to 24, as part of the activities for the country's first National Reading Week after the State Council regulation to promote reading among the public took effect on Feb 1.

The *Encyclopedia of China* is the country's first and most authoritative comprehensive modern encyclopedia. Launched in 1978 and published by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House under the China Publishing Group, it stands as a landmark national cultural project.

The latest edition, the third one, pioneered a new approach by prioritizing the online version while creating a concise print edition, establishing a knowledge system with professional, thematic, and general sections. By the end of 2025, the online version had 519,000 entries, and the print version was published in 43 volumes, marking significant progress, according to Yang Muzhi, chief editor of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)*.

"Thanks to the efforts of more than 60,000 experts and scholars, the print and online versions of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* have become significant platforms for showcasing Chinese culture and confidence," said Mao Yuansheng, general manager and deputy secretary of the Party Committee of the China Publishing Group, in his speech at the main forum of the conference on April 23.

The China Encyclopedia Conference, themed "Empowering Thousands of Industries, Reaching Thousands of Households", attracted over 600 guests from various sectors. It offered a rich array of activities, including a main conference, forums, a science popularization exhibition, and a music-sharing session, creating a grand celebration of knowledge for the public.

The theme of the conference reflects the trend of digital integration, making authoritative knowledge more accessible, said Mao.

The rapid development of technologies such as AI and big data is profoundly changing the paradigm of knowledge production and dissemination.

Encyclopedias should embrace technology by forming a "human-machine collaboration" model that combines experts, AI, and platforms to solve the challenges of traditional compilation, while steadfastly upholding the spirit of science and the essence of humanity, thereby strengthening the foundation of the national knowledge system, said Bai Chunli, vice-chairman of the editorial board of the third edition of the *Encyclopedia of China* and editor-in-chief of the chemistry section.

Li Yang, a member of the editorial board of the encyclopedia's third edition and editor-in-chief of the economics section, emphasized the critical importance of philosophy and social sciences. In the AI era, cultivating talent requires philosophical thinking and social science literacy. "The encyclopedia must undertake the important task of 'clarifying the source' by providing accurate, systematic, and authoritative knowledge", he said.

However, while new technologies like AI unleash innovative potential, they also pose challenges to copyright protection.

Zhou Huilin, president of the China Copyright Association, pointed out that copyright protection is crucial for promoting the dissemination of encyclopedic knowledge. As a high-quality source of authoritative knowledge, the copyright protection of encyclopedias is particularly important. He proposed three initiatives: adhering to the original source of knowledge, improving institutional safeguards, and deepening cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Gao Shiyi, president of the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, highlighted that, as a major national cultural project, the encyclopedia focuses on five key areas: digitalization, platform development, intelligence, branding, and systemization to make encyclopedic knowledge accessible to every household. Future efforts will emphasize content quality and collaboration with research institutions, the education sector, and tech companies to build a reliable and engaging knowledge ecosystem, empowering various industries, he said.

Wang Wei, an editorial board member of the third edition of the encyclopedia and editor-in-chief of the archaeology section, said that the archaeology volume is based on Chinese practices and breaks through the constraints of the Western "three elements of civilization" comprising writing systems, urban settlements and metallurgy, proposing new definitions for civilization.

Currently, there is a need to integrate encyclopedic resources with digital technology to support innovation in industries such as cultural tourism and manufacturing, bringing knowledge to life and contributing Chinese wisdom to human civilization, he added.

As a core component of the conference, the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House unveiled and introduced several significant achievements.

Among these, the print version of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* and the China Encyclopedia Online represent not just the digitization of books, but also the networking and dynamic upgrading of the national authoritative knowledge system, serving as the "knowledge foundation of the digital age".

The Encyclopedia of Basic Education Network is aimed at the education sector, building a student-centered, technology-supported integrated education ecosystem based on the concept of "borderless learning and comprehensive resource education", striving to provide strong support for teaching and learning in schools.

The Digital-Intelligence Integration Achievement Matrix includes the *China Through Time and Space* digital exhibition, VR youth digital classrooms, and XR science popularization films allowing users to learn and acquire knowledge in an immersive, interactive way, making the learning process enjoyable.

The unveiling of the *Encyclopedia of Chinese and Italian Culture: Art* introduces representative achievements in the field of art from both China and Italy. It aims to deepen exchange and interaction in art and culture between the two countries, which are jointly committed to the protection of cultural heritage and the better promotion of cultural development. It is compiled by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House and the Italian Institute of the Encyclopedia (Treccani Institute).

On the afternoons of April 23 and 24, six parallel forums were held. The forums included the Encyclopedia Future Path Seminar, Encyclopedia Education Forum, Brand and Cultural Development Forum, Home and School Emergency Safety Development Forum, the launch of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Science Reading Activity, and the release of the List of Outstanding Chinese Popular Science Books along with the New Era Popular Science Publishing and Nationwide Reading Promotion Forum. Each forum aimed to create a "knowledge service solution" for a specific field.

Contact the writer at yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

Ancient porcelain city embraces global openness and creative innovation





Left: Spanish potter Jaume Ribalta (left) and his friends display porcelain at a fair in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. XINHUA **Right:** A foreign artist looks at ceramics at a carnival held on the sidelines of the 2025 China Jingdezhen International Ceramic Expo in Jingdezhen on Oct 17 last year. ZHOU MI / XINHUA

NANCHANG — With a 3D printer nozzle rotating as it smoothly extrudes clay, a delicate ceramic work is gradually taking shape — a scene that would once have been unimaginable to earlier generations of artisans in Jingdezhen.

It is happening in a studio in the ancient Chinese porcelain capital, a city in East China's Jiangxi province with a porcelain-making history of more than 1,700 years.

The studio's owner, Michael May, a 38-year-old ceramic artist from the United States, believes this new way of "printing" ceramics can greatly expand both the possibilities and efficiency of ceramic production.

"I originally thought that Jingdezhen would reject new technologies, but I didn't expect that there would be 3D printing factories everywhere. The equipment can be rented even in a village," he says.

May adds that the ancient city's openness and inclusiveness led him to stay, continue his experiments and creations, and offer courses to share his techniques and ideas.

Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), ceramics crafted in Jingdezhen have been exported to Central Asia, West Asia, Europe and Africa. Today, the city still retains its global appeal, drawing more than 5,000 ceramic enthusiasts like May from around the world at peak times.

"Jingdezhen is like an unfolding world map of ceramic culture, and every person who loves ceramics can find a place of their own," says Qurat ul Ain from Pakistan, who is pursuing a doctoral degree at Jingdezhen Ceramic University.

She says she once struggled to decide on a research direction. "Pakistan also has an ancient history of pottery-making, but there are no local doctoral programs related to ceramics, nor much systematic research in the field.

"It was my mentor who encouraged me to focus on the research of ceramic culture in my country," she says. "Jingdezhen not only has a profound history but also an open international exchange program."

As early as 2015, the Taoxichuan cultural and creative district in Jingdezhen launched the Migratory Bird Program, an international artist residency initiative. The program has sent invitations to art institutions in more than 50 countries and regions, attracting 3,600 artists from around the world.

The district holds fairs of various sizes regularly. About 28,600 craftspeople have set up stalls there, with an average age of just 28.

Matt Watterson, a 31-year-old American ceramic artist, enjoys strolling through the city's fairs, where he often finds old ceramic fragments to incorporate into his own creations.

"I can turn my creativity into works by collaborating with the locals here, which is very fulfilling," he says. In his view, the locals' openness and friendliness represent the vibe of this city.

Jingdezhen, with a population of more than 1.6 million, has recorded a net population inflow of 136,000 over the past decade. Among those who have started long-term businesses in the city, more than half come from outside Jiangxi province or even from overseas.

Thanks to increasingly convenient visa-free policies, Jaume Ribalta, a Spanish potter born in the 1990s, was able to invite his parents from his hometown in Spain to Jingdezhen.

"This is the farthest journey my parents have traveled so far. I entertained them in my rural studio in Xianghu village," he says. "I also took them to decorate their own ceramic works and helped them understand the culture of the millennia-old porcelain capital."

After traveling to 20 countries, May finally chose Jingdezhen as the place to realize his ideas. Recently, he has been working to expand his studio.

"I sold all my belongings and came to this city," he says. "I never thought that this place was so inclusive before I came here."

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SPORTS

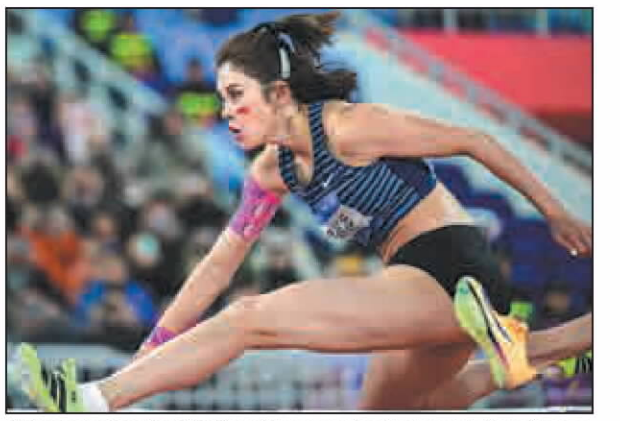


China's Chen Yujie will take on Jamaica's Shericka Jackson and Sha'Carri Richardson of the US in front of her home crowd. XINHUA

ATHLETICS

SET FOR A SPARKLING CONTEST

Chinese talent ready to challenge global elites at Diamond League doubleheader



China's star hurdler Wu Yanni has promised to try and close the gap with the international pack at the Diamond League opener. XINHUA

By SUN XIAOCHEN
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

With talented young Chinese athletes all laced up and ready to pit themselves against a stacked field of elite champions, the world's premier track and field series has guaranteed fans a thrilling season opener in China.

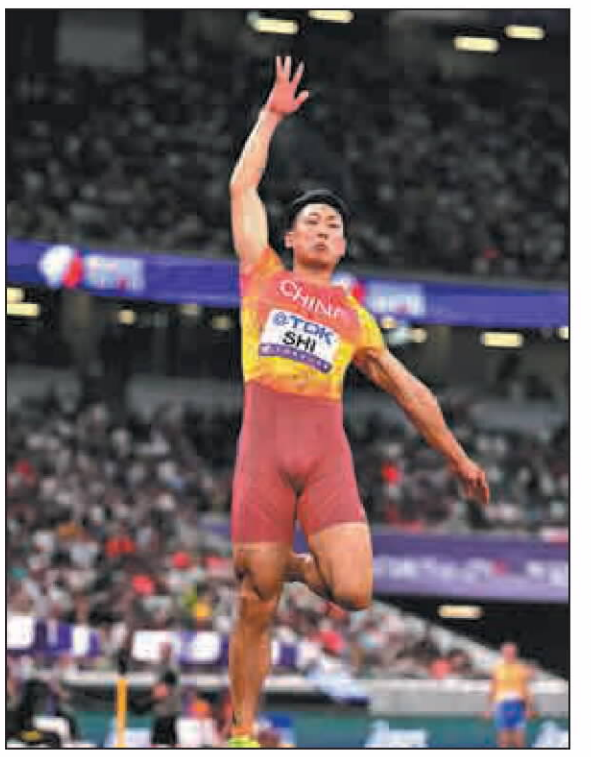
The World Athletics Diamond League's 2026 curtain-raiser, to be held in Keqiao of Shaoxing city, Zhejiang province, on Saturday, promises to deliver a spectacular showpiece, with China's best sprinters, jumpers and throwers raring to challenge the world's top stars — more than 20 Olympic and world champions, including as many as six world record holders — in front of a home crowd.

And, offering just enough time for pulses to return to normal, a week later in Xiamen, Fujiang province, on May 23, they do it all again, capping off the season's tone-setting doubleheader.

Leading the star-studded international cast confirmed for the Shaoxing leg are Sweden's two-time pole vault Olympic champion Armand "Mondo" Duplantis, men's 400m hurdles world record holder Karsten Warholm of Norway and the fastest women's 100m hurdler in history Tobi Amusan of Nigeria.

A highly popular overseas star among Chinese fans, Duplantis, who just set his 15th and latest world record of 6.31m at an indoor meet in southeastern Swedish city Uppsala in March, will open his outdoor season in a loaded men's field that also includes Greece's Emmanouil Karalis, who moved to second on the athletes' world ranking in February with a 6.17m clearance in Athens, and two-time world champion Sam Kendricks of the United States.





World record pole vaulter Armand "Mondo" Duplantis of Sweden (left) will look to produce another memorable performance in front of the Chinese fans, while defending long jump champion Shi Yuhao is hoping to land on the top of the podium again. XINHUA

Having triumphant memories of China, including his then-world-record-setting feat of 6.24m at last year's Xiamen leg, Duplantis, who has stayed unbeaten since 2023, will be keen to extend his winning streak and maybe just give fans another unforgettable moment this weekend.

Warholm will also kick-start his season hoping to carry on the momentum from his last visit to Shaoxing, when he clocked a 2025 world-leading 47.28 to win the 400m hurdles. This year though, he will be competing in the series-special 300m format, which was added to the league program last season and has replaced the traditional 400m in Shaoxing this year. He will be up against 2022 world champion Alison dos Santos of Brazil and world bronze medalist Trevor Bassitt of United States.

"I am so excited to return to Keqiao again this year," said the 30-year-old Norwegian, who set the 400m world mark of 45.94 with his golden finish at Tokyo 2020. "Winning here for the first time in my career last year was such a great feeling. I look forward to a great battle."

Women's track is expected to provide even greater intrigue, with local favorites ambitious to make their presence felt against their mighty international counterparts in both the 200m sprint and 100m hurdles.

Loaded with star power from Jamaica's two-time world champion Shericka Jackson and 2023 world 100m champion Sha'Carri Richardson of the US, the 200m race in Shaoxing is a dream stage for China's teen prodigy Chen Yujie, a Zhejiang native, to measure her meteoric rise against the world's fastest in front of her home crowd.

Chen, a 17-year-old high school student born and developed in Ningbo, shot to fame by winning both the 100m and 200m finals at the 2025 Chinese National Games, becoming the youngest ever to win both sprint titles in the domestic Games' history.

With a personal best of 22.97, and setting a new Asian U18 record at a South Korean meet in May last year, Chen is the only Asian athlete currently ranked in the 200m top 50.

The 100m hurdles will feature an even stronger lineup, bringing together winners of the past three outdoor worlds – Ditaji Kambundji, Danielle Williams and Amusan – along with reigning Olympic champion Masai Russell.

Nigerian great Amusan leads the field with her world record dash of 12.12, set in 2022 in Eugene, Oregon, yet faces an unpredictable test in Shaoxing with the starting blocks stacked with talent.

China's own star hurdler Wu Yanni, a celebrity among the sport's community domestically, is determined to at least try to keep up with the pack.

"I won't set any limit for myself, despite the gap between myself and the world's best," said Wu, who set her PB of 12.74 at the 2024 national championships.

"I will give my best for sure."

Shaoxing will also host a thrilling men's 100m sprint, where reigning 200m Olympic champion Letsile Tebogo of Botswana, South Africa's Akani Simbine and the US trio of Christian Coleman, Kenny Bednarek and Trayvon Bromell are pushing the bar high enough for an Olympic-caliber showdown.

In men's long jump, the Chinese combo of Shi Yuhao, the meet's defending champion, and Zhang Mingkun, who had to withdraw last year due to injury, are both expected to leap onto the podium on home soil.

After the Chinese doubleheader, the Diamond League will travel to another 12 cities across four continents en route to the series finale in Brussels in September.

SOCCER

How Paris Saint-Germain won its record-extending 14th Ligue 1 title

PARIS — Paris Saint-Germain ended up with the title again, but at least it had a rival for most of the season this time.

The defending champion secured its fifth straight French league crown — and record-extending 14th overall — by beating its closest chaser Lens 2-0 on Wednesday.

It finally ended the resistance of Lens, which held its own until the penultimate round, despite having a much smaller squad and budget than PSG, one of the world's most valuable clubs.

"It's the first time in my three seasons here that there's been a genuine rival," PSG boss Luis Enrique said, praising Lens and its coach Pierre Sage. "It has been motivating, they have shown their level."

Last season saw PSG wrapping up the title with six games to spare — and the only two league defeats of that campaign came after the title was sealed. PSG finished 19 points clear of second-place Marseille and scored a whopping 92 goals.

It was not so easy this time.

PSG has lost five league games so far and is nine points ahead of one-time champion Lens heading into Sunday's final round.

Sage's far smaller squad was hit by fatigue and the team — however willing — could not realistically sustain the challenge over 34 matches. It was PSG's fifth straight league title since Lille's championship victory in 2021.

Here's a closer look at how it was won.

Sharing the goals

PSG relied heavily on the scoring of Ousmane Dembele last season, when he netted 21 league goals.

This season, no PSG player was near the top of the scoring charts and the goals have been spread around.

Dembele and winger Bradley Barcola have netted 10 each, with Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (8), Desire Doue (7) and Goncalo Ramos (6) all contributing at key moments.

Kvaratskhelia's impact

In years to come, Kvaratskhelia may eventually be seen as the best signing in the club's history. The Georgia winger has been inspirational for PSG all season.

Not only does he provide incredible speed, finishing and dribbling from the left wing — even though he can play with almost equal efficiency on the right — his tireless running and relentless tracking back marks him out as a brilliant defender.

No wonder Enrique was delighted to sign him from Napoli in January last year, having failed in a previous bid.

Although he paid a large transfer fee of 70 million euros (then $72 million), it is starting to look like a bargain.

Ruthless selections

Enrique showed a ruthless streak by dropping goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier — a summer signing to replace Gianluigi Donnarumma — and swapping him out for Matvey Safonov, who made several saves against Lens on Wednesday.

Enrique sent a clear message to his players that status and reputation do not offer them any guarantees of first-team soccer.

He did the same last season when he dropped Dembele for a crucial Champions League game on disciplinary grounds, and the season before, when he sold Neymar and Marco Verratti in order to rebuild the side in his own way.

In an era of increasing player power, Enrique showed that his authority could not be eroded.

He also maintained a close bond with the fans, constantly praising them — and even singing one of the club anthems with them following the Champions League semifinals when PSG overcame German juggernaut Bayern Munich.

He also managed the fatigue levels of his players well in a season that began with recurring injuries.

While he regularly rested captain Marquinhos and Dembele in Ligue 1, he kept midfielders Vitinha and Warren Zaire-Emery in the side as near ever-presents.

"We always look for what's best for each player individually. If you play less or more, it doesn't mean you're weak or strong, but that you have different needs," Enrique explained. "I always aim to get the three points, but also to protect the players' health."

He was also magnanimous in a rare defeat — namely when Sage won the award for the French league's coach of the year.

"He deserves to win this trophy, Enrique said. "Because what he's done with Lens is incredible."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Jingzhou Intermediate People's Court of Hubei Province

Announcement

(2026) E 10 P No. 1

The Court, upon the application of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd., ruled on April 2, 2026 to accept the case of bankruptcy reorganization of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd., and on April 30, 2026, appointed Beijing Dacheng Law Offices, LLP (Wuhan) as the administrator of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrator").

Creditors of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. shall file their claims with the Administrator (mailing address: No. 17 Philips Road, Xinjiangkou Town, Songzi City, Hubei Province; postal code: 434200; contact person: Fu Sailun; tel.: +86 1857-2830-083; email: sailun.fu@dentons.cn) by 24:00 (Beijing time) on July 15, 2026, providing a written statement of the amount of the claim, whether the claim is secured, and whether it is a joint and several claim, along with relevant supporting documents. Specific document requirements and filing methods are subject to the Notice on Filing of Claims published by the Administrator on the National Enterprise Bankruptcy Information Disclosure Platform (https://pccz.court.gov.cn).

Creditors who fail to file their claims within the aforementioned period may make supplementary filings before the draft reorganization plan is submitted to the creditors' meeting for discussion, provided that they shall bear the costs incurred for reviewing and verifying such supplementary filed claims. Creditors who fail to file their claims in accordance with the law shall not exercise their rights during the implementation of the reorganization plan. After the implementation of the reorganization plan is completed, they may exercise their rights in accordance with the repayment conditions for similar claims as stipulated in the reorganization plan. Debtors or property holders of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. shall promptly settle debts or deliver property to the Administrator.

The Court has scheduled to hold the first creditors' meeting of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. at 10:00 (Beijing time) on July 30, 2026, via the National Enterprise Bankruptcy Information Disclosure Platform (https://pccz.court.gov.cn). Creditors who file their claims in accordance with the law have the right to attend the creditors' meeting. If an attending creditor is a legal person or any other organization, the documents evidencing its legal person status shall be submitted; if an attending creditor is a natural person, the individual identification documents shall be submitted; if an agent is appointed to attend the meeting, a power of attorney shall be submitted. The identification documents and powers of attorney submitted by a creditor that has no domicile within the territory of the People's Republic of China shall be notarized by a notarial institution in the country where the documents are issued and authenticated by the embassy or consulate of the People's Republic of China in that country, or shall undergo the certification procedures stipulated in the relevant treaties concluded between the People's Republic of China and that country.

It is hereby announced.

Jingzhou Intermediate People's Court of Hubei Province
May 12, 2026

湖北省荆州市中级人民法院

公 告

（2026）鄂 10 破 1 号

本院根据奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的申请于 2026 年 4 月 2 日裁定受理奥途科技（湖北）有限公司破产重整一案，并于 2026 年 4 月 30 日指定北京大成（武汉）律师事务所担任奥途科技（湖北）有限公司管理人（以下简称管理人）。

奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的债权人应在 2026 年 7 月 15 日 24 时（北京时间）之前，向管理人（通讯地址：湖北省松滋市新江口镇飞利浦路 17 号；邮政编码：434200；联系人：傅律师，联系电话：+86-1857 2830 083，电子邮箱：sailun.fu@dentons.cn）申报债权，书面说明债权数额、有无财产担保及是否属于连带债权，并提供相关证据文件，具体申报文件要求及申报方式以管理人在全国企业破产重整案件信息网（https://pccz.court.gov.cn）发布的《债权申报通知》为准。

未能在上述期限内申报债权的债权人，可以在重整计划草案提交债权人会议讨论前补充申报，但要承担为审查和确认补充申报债权所产生的费用。未依法申报债权的，在重整计划执行期间不得行使权利，在重整计划执行完毕后可以按照重整计划规定的同类债权的清偿条件行使权利。奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的债务人或者财产持有人应尽快向管理人清偿债务或交付财产。

本院定于 2026 年 7 月 30 日 10 时（北京时间）通过全国企业破产重整案件信息网（https://pccz.court.gov.cn）召开奥途科技（湖北）有限公司第一次债权人会议。依法申报债权的债权人有权参加债权人会议，出席会议的债权人系法人或其他组织的，应提交企业主体资格证明文件；债权人系自然人的，应提交个人身份证明文件；如委托代理人出席会议的，应提交授权委托文件。在中华人民共和国领域内没有住所的债权人提交的身份证明文件及授权委托文件，应当经所在国公证机关公证，并经中华人民共和国驻该国使领馆认证，或者履行中华人民共和国与该所在国订立的有关条约中规定的证明手续。

特此公告。

湖北省荆州市中级人民法院
二〇二六年五月十二日

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